

# PlanTalk

VOLUME 3

SPRING, 2000

## Long Term Disability comes under HEBP trusteeship

**A** new funding agreement with the provincial government has paved the way for the Healthcare Employees Benefits Plan (HEBP) Board to take over the Long Term Disability (LTD) plan from the Manitoba Health Organizations (MHO).

Ongoing discussions of LTD funding with the province, because of the wind-up of MHO and HEBP's desire to take over the LTD plan from MHO, were brought to a conclusion at the end of 1999. Funding for the employer share of the cost of LTD was secured from this agreement.

Joint trusteeship of the LTD plan allows the HEBP Board to ensure the plan is fully funded at all times and able to meet its obligation to pay members who qualify for LTD benefits. HEBP trustees will also review the LTD program in an effort to improve member service focusing on the areas of adjudication, early intervention, member assistance and rehabilitation.

### What this means for members

"Bottom line? A secure LTD plan," says HEBP Chair, Bob Romphf. "Our biggest concern for members all along has been that the LTD plan might be wound up with no suitable replacement in place. That's no longer an issue."

Romphf says that, while LTD is the kind of benefit you hope to never have to use, the security of having the plan, if and when it's needed, is crucial.

"With the security of LTD assured, we can now shift our

focus toward providing better, more expeditious assistance to members who need LTD," says Romphf.

The Long Term Disability plan provides members with income should they become unable to work because of a disability. The disability can be because of illness or injury, and it does not have to happen at work. For more details on LTD and qualifications to receive the benefit, refer to the HEBP Long Term Disability brochure.

**"Bottom line? A secure LTD plan..."**



The Board of Directors of the Healthcare Employees Pension Plan - Manitoba and the Healthcare Employees Benefits Plan are pleased to announce appointment of Mr. Brian LaBelle as Executive Director of both organizations effective January 1, 2000. Mr. LaBelle succeeds Claude De Gagne who retired in 1999.

Mr. LaBelle brings a wealth of pension and benefits administration experience to his new position. He joined HEPP/HEBP as the Director of Administration in August 1997 and, prior to that, supervised the benefits programs for James Richardson and Sons Ltd. and affiliated companies. In all, Mr. LaBelle has over 24 years of experience in pension and benefits planning and administration.

## HSC employees join HEBP Group Healthcare

HEBP's group healthcare plan is 4,500 members stronger as the result of HSC employees joining the plan effective March 1, 2000.

"Moving to the HEBP group healthcare plan gives our HSC members the same coverage as the majority of other healthcare employees throughout the province," says Doug Laurie, a HEBP Board Trustee and IUOE Union Representative at HSC. HSC is one of the largest healthcare employers in the province and employment transfers between it and other facilities are common. Laurie points out that HSC members also have the opportunity to now choose more comprehensive coverage under the HEBP Enhanced Plan.

A mailing to all HSC members in mid-January included information about the change to the HEBP group healthcare plan. HEBP Member Services Representatives also held a series of information sessions at the Health Sciences Centre in January to answer employees' questions about HEBP benefits.

Former HSC Pension Plan retired members also came under the HEBP Retired Members coverage on March 1, 2000.

HSC employees are reminded to submit your enrolment forms and changes to the HSC Employee Benefits Department by April 30, 2000.

## Welcome!

A number of facilities have joined HEPP/HEBP since last summer. The continuing expansion of participating facilities in HEPP/HEBP means increased portability of pension and benefits for our 35,000 members throughout Manitoba.

Facilities now participating in one or more plans are:

- Initiatives for Women's Health Inc. "A Friend Indeed"
- 38888897 Manitoba Associations Inc.
- Calvary Place
- Centre de Sante
- Oakview Place
- Tuxedo Villa
- Heritage House

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# The Inside Story ...

## On Benefits

Benefit information provided in PlanTalk is based on an overview of group benefits plans. Not all employers participate in all five plans, therefore, you should check with your employer to find out what coverage is available to you.

### BlueNet - Point of Sale Drug Card

Effective June 1, 2000, HEBP is introducing, on an optional basis, the BlueNet Point of Sale Drug Card. For a cost of \$2.00 per month, the BlueNet card gives you the convenience of only having to pay your portion of prescription drugs up to your maximum benefit. The BlueNet card can only be used at participating pharmacies and must be presented at the time of purchase. You still have the option of collecting your prescription drug receipts and submitting them by mail to Blue Cross for payment.

Information on how you can sign up for the BlueNet card will be included in your Open Enrolment package or by contacting HEBP at 942-6591 or Toll Free 1-888-842-4233. Once you sign up for the BlueNet Card, you must keep the card for a minimum of one year.

### Group Healthcare & Dental Premium Change

Your group healthcare and group dental premiums are based on past claims experience of each plan. The HEBP Board of Trustees reviews the claims experience regularly and rates are adjusted as necessary.

Effective April 1, 2000, the following new premium rates have been approved:

#### GROUP HEALTHCARE

	Old Rate		New Rate	
	Single	Family	Single	Family
Active				
Basic	\$7.90	\$18.95	\$7.95 (↑.05)	\$19.05 (↑.10)
Enhanced	\$15.00	\$38.20	\$15.85 (↑.85)	\$40.35 (↑2.15)
Retiree				
Level I	\$7.40	\$12.90	\$5.75 (↓1.65)	\$10.05 (↓2.85)
Level II	\$21.50	\$35.10	\$20.40 (↓1.10)	\$33.15 (↓1.95)
Group Dental*				
Active only	Single	Family	Single	Family
	\$18.50	\$54.00	\$19.00 (↑.50)	\$55.60 (↑1.60)

\*If your employer shares the cost of your dental premium, your new rate will be half of that listed above (50%).

*Premium rates are reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees, and subject to change.*

## Reading your annual pension statement

Every June, HEPP produces your annual pension benefit statement based on your pension benefits earned to December 31 of the previous year. When you receive your statement, review it carefully to ensure the information is correct. You should keep the statement with your important personal papers. Below are some of the frequently asked questions and important things to look for when statements are distributed.

Q. Why doesn't the amount of credited service match the number of hours I worked?

A. Credited service is matched to pensionable hours - not all hours worked. For example, you may have worked a great deal of overtime, however, overtime is not considered "pensionable." It also depends on the base hours for the position you worked.

Q. Why does my statement show an incorrect date of employment?

A. The date of employment shown is what your facility reports to us. If it is incorrect, you should contact your employer to have it corrected and reported to HEPP. A revised statement will be issued.

Q. Why is my credited service only one year when I worked more than one year's worth of hours at more than one facility?

A. There is a cap of one year on credited service.

Q. Why is my credited service less than one year when I worked all year?

A. You may be credited with less than one year of service if you have not worked the equivalent full time hours for your position.

Q. The earned monthly pension benefit shown on my statement is for when I turn 65. What if I retire at an earlier age?

A. Age 65 is considered the normal retirement date. However, you may retire with an unreduced benefit if your age and years of service total 80 or if you are age 60 and have two or more years of employment service. You can also retire with a reduced monthly pension if you are at least age 55 and have completed two years of employment service.

# The Inside Story ...



## On Pension



## Member Feedback

### A defined benefit...

The Healthcare Employees Pension Plan is a 'defined benefit' plan. As the term implies, the pension benefit you get when you retire is defined by a formula. It's defined by how many years of credited service you have multiplied by the average of your best five years of annual pensionable earnings out of the last 11 years of your employment.

A question frequently asked by members is if they can increase their pension benefit by contributing more to the plan. The simple answer is no, because the plan is a defined benefit. Contributing more to the plan will not increase your years of credited service nor your highest average income - the two factors used to determine what your pension benefit will be.

### Pension table

To give you an idea of what your pension income might be after 10 to 40 years credited service, the dollar amounts shown in the table below provide an estimate of gross monthly pension benefits based on the HEPP defined benefit calculation of average annual salary and years of credited service. All amounts shown below are estimates only based on an unreduced pension at time of retirement and may not reflect your particular circumstance. For a more precise pension income estimate, refer to the earned monthly pension benefit on your annual statement.

**Monthly Pension Benefit Estimate Table**

Average Monthly salary	Years Credited service*	10 years	20 years	30 years	40 years
		Monthly pension =	Monthly pension =	Monthly pension =	Monthly pension =
\$4200		\$683	\$1366	\$2050	\$2733
\$3300		\$503	\$1006	\$1510	\$2013
\$2500		\$375	\$750	\$1125	\$1500
\$1600		\$240	\$480	\$720	\$960
\$800		\$120	\$240	\$360	\$480

\*One year credited service is given for one year full time equivalent hours. If you work less than full time equivalent hours, your credited service each year will equal less than one (1). Full time equivalent hours vary among facilities, unions and positions.

NOTE: All amounts shown are ESTIMATES only and include no deductions for early retirement, interrupted service or other factors which may affect pension benefits. For your personal earned monthly pension benefit, please refer to your annual statement.

### Open enrolment

#### Group Healthcare Benefits

The HEBP Board has approved a general open enrolment to address the needs of those members with no group healthcare coverage or basic group health coverage. An open enrolment is only offered for a short period every few years and allows you to either join the HEBP group healthcare plan or increase your basic coverage to enhanced.

#### Watch your mail!

Eligible healthcare employees who have previously opted out of HEBP group healthcare coverage or who currently have only basic coverage will receive an information package in the mail by mid-April. Please review the information carefully and use the open enrolment form to enroll in basic or enhanced coverage. Enrolment forms should be submitted to your employer and processed for coverage effective June 1, 2000.

Enclosed is a comparison of the Basic and Enhanced plans for active members and Level One and Level Two coverage for retired members.

If you have a comment or suggestion for PlanTalk, please write us at:

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HEPP/HEBP Manitoba  
900-200 Graham Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 4L5  
or  
Email [carter@hepp.mb.ca](mailto:carter@hepp.mb.ca)

Q. How much will my monthly pension be if I retire early?

A. If you retire after age 60 or after reaching your Magic 80 date, you will receive an unreduced monthly pension based on your years of pensionable service. If you retire before age 60 or before you reach your Magic 80 date, your monthly pension is reduced by about 1/4 of 1 per cent for each month you retire before age 60 or Magic 80. When you're ready to begin planning your retirement date, our Member Services Representatives will provide you with a pension estimate upon request.

Q. Why should I keep my annual pension statement?

A. HEPP recommends you keep your annual pension statement in a safe place so that you can ensure your information has been correctly updated each year. It's also important to have this information handy when you begin your retirement plans.

Q. Why can't I get a statement in January?

A. The timeline HEPP follows for producing 35,000 annual pension statements every year includes collecting all updated information from the facilities (January and February), tabulating the information and checking for discrepancies (March and April), inputting the final information into the system and producing the statements (May and June) and mailing the statements first class to members (June). Potential for delays has been built into the timeline so that HEPP can get statements in the mail by the end of June at the very latest.

## Employee Profile



**M**ember Services Representative (MSR) Rhonda Carriere learned at a young age the value of service with a smile. As a teenager, Rhonda helped out at her parents' small town restaurant, and the people skills she learned then continue to benefit her as she serves HEPP/HEBP members today.

"The most important aspect of my job is ensuring members have the information and answers they need to make comfortable choices about their pension and benefits," says Rhonda. "Members often ask what do I think they should choose, but I can't answer that for them. I can, however, provide them with every bit of information they need to make the best choice according to their lifestyle, their family situation and their personal needs."

With 17 years experience in pension and benefits, Rhonda is a valuable resource to HEPP/HEBP members, particularly when it comes time to retire.

"I can be of most use to members who have already taken the time to review their benefits," she says. "That way, when we get together either in person or on the telephone, we can really focus on what they don't understand, rather than the entire pension or benefit plan."

Rhonda says there are three critical steps in the retirement process that she hopes all members are aware of:

1. Call HEPP a year to six months before the date you think you want to retire to get an estimate, and then call back once you've received it if you require any clarification about the options or the estimate itself.
2. Call three months before your actual retirement date to advise HEPP of your retirement. This will allow you plenty of time to receive and review your retirement options package.
3. Review the package and fill out as much as possible on your own. Then make an appointment to meet with Rhonda or one of the four other MSRs, either in person or on the telephone, to review the papers and fill in anything you may have missed.

Rhonda says following these three steps will help to ensure the retirement is finalized about a month before the member retires, and eliminates any possible delays in receiving pension benefits.

## Member Profile



**O**ne of the hardest things about having cancer is telling your friends and family. For HEBP member Gayline Gallaway, that difficult duty had to be performed not once, but twice. She was first diagnosed with breast cancer in March 1998 and then with brain tumors in September 1999.

"My husband Robert and I have taken a very positive attitude toward this illness," says Gayline, who is recuperating, after radiation therapy, at her home in Gilbert Plains. "We knew we had a long journey ahead of us, but we were ready to face it."

Speaking to Gayline, one can't help but admire her spirit and positive attitude. "You have to find ways to cope, and for me, it was doing a lot of research and reading about the cancer. The more information I had, the better I felt."

When she was diagnosed, Gayline was working in the payroll and benefits department of the Gilbert Plains Health Centre. She says the last thing she ever expected to be told was that she had cancer.

"There was no history of cancer in my family and I was very healthy in every other way, so it came as a total shock." Gayline says she often commented that she never expected to use her benefits, like Long Term Disability (LTD), but was always glad to know she had them if she ever did need them. "It's a real comfort to not have finances to worry about when you're ill."

As part of her LTD rehabilitation program, Gayline was able to return to work on a part time, work share basis within a few months of her first surgery in 1998. She says her doctor recommended the return to work as part of her recovery, and she started working full time again in October 1998.

As Gayline recovers from her recent cancer treatment, she credits her family (husband Robert, daughter Sheila and son Bryan) and many friends in the community for their love and support while she's climbed this mountain.

"I read once that survivorship is an attitude, and it's an attitude that I choose to adopt with the support of my family, friends and HEBP."

## Retiree Corner

### Survivor Pension Benefits

When a family member dies, even the smallest task can seem overwhelming. That's why HEPP makes every effort to ensure pension benefits payable to your beneficiary are easily accessible.

HEPP should be notified about the death, by phone or letter, as soon as possible. Our staff will respond with a letter listing all documents required to stop monthly pension payments to the deceased and to set up survivor benefits in the beneficiary's name. The letter will also include a request for an original or certified copy of the death certificate (a funeral home certificate of death is also acceptable). Specifics on any paid-up or post retirement life insurance will be provided to your beneficiary at the same time the initial letter requesting information is sent.

Once your beneficiary has sent all the information requested by HEPP, we will process any applicable payments in their name, including any applicable retroactive payment. About four to six months after HEPP is notified of the death, a T4A taxation slip for the deceased will be sent to the surviving beneficiary or executor/executrix of the estate for income tax purposes.

## From the Boardroom

### Board Changes

The HEPP Board of Trustees welcomes the following newly appointed Trustees:

- Robert Ziegler, United Food and Commercial Workers
- Ray Spokes, St. Boniface General Hospital
- Gary Buchanan, Central RHA
- Marilyn Robinson, appointed by Regional Health Authorities of Manitoba

Many thanks and best wishes to John Sinclair and Frank Ryplanski, two of HEPP's founding trustees, who have resigned from the HEPP Board.

The HEBP Board of Trustees welcomes newly appointed trustee Mark Neskar from Seven Oaks Hospital to the Board. Gary McIntosh from the Brandon RHA has resigned from the HEBP Board.

