



Union Benefits' Response to COVID-19 Crisis

April 3, 2020

Since early-March, Union Benefits has taken increasing and determined action to address the serious health risks associated with the COVID-19 crisis. The Union Benefits' management team is focused on the health and safety of all Union Benefits Staff – not only for their well-being, but to ensure the continued operation of the company.

Union Benefits plays an important role in maintaining the health of our Members and their families. Our Members need to rely on Union Benefits during this health crisis so Members and their families can get the medication and treatments they need as well as maintain their benefit coverage from month to month. As a result, please be assured that our goal is to remain operating throughout this crisis while protecting the health and safety of our valued staff.

Mitigating the Risks

In line with our business continuity plan, Union Benefits has implemented the following actions to help mitigate the risks to our staff, customers and suppliers:

- Union Benefits' offices in Waterloo and Halifax are closed to visitors to limit the exposure that might unknowingly occur in our workspace. While Waterloo-area members are able to use the outside "drop box" for paper claims, everyone is being urged to use the mobile claims app, online claims facility, eDental, or Canada Post.
- Effective Monday, March 23rd, 2020 most Union Benefits' staff shifted to work from home mode. While electronic connectivity to our internal systems, email and phones will be available to staff, we note that response times may not be up to our usual standards. We ask that everyone exercise patience and respect as our team will be doing their best in less than optimal conditions to continue to serve your needs.
- Union Benefits is maintaining a minimal "skeleton-crew" in our Waterloo office to support our staff working from home and help keep operations running. These staff will be working under enhanced workplace safety conditions including a strict cleaning protocol; personal hygiene practices; social distancing; and working inside a closed, controlled office environment.
- Our Halifax office will continue to operate Monday to Wednesday during normal business hours but will remain closed to visitors.
- Union Benefits staff have been briefed (verbally and in writing) on rigorous health and safety practices to follow while in the office including staying home if sick, social distancing, personal hygiene (e.g. hand washing), cleaning work and common area surfaces, etc.

- Management has eliminated all travel and in-person meetings in favour of using teleconference / video conference meeting formats. Non-essential meetings may be postponed and rescheduled as required.

Union Benefits has and will continue to publish any service updates on our website home page (and on the home page of the individual Local's Member-only section on our website as well) to keep everyone informed about our service changes, and any changes associated with their benefits (e.g. Out of Country/Province Travel Benefits). We will continue to use our website to keep our members, Trustees and business partners informed.

Union Benefits -Ready to help!

While Union Benefits remains fully staffed during this crisis, we are operating under less than optimal conditions. Still, our team is ready and able to help Members and their families through this challenging time! We offer the following tips to help you with your claims and questions:

- Prescription drugs can continue to be filled at your pharmacy using your Union Benefits drug card subject to the terms of your benefit plan formulary.
- Extended health and most paramedical claims can be submitted electronically. If you haven't registered already, there is not a better time to take advantage of this than right now! The Union Benefits website has all the information you need to get you online – either on your home computer or mobile device.
- If you have questions about your coverage, you can find the most recent Member Booklet online at the Union Benefits website! If you still have questions, call or email our Member Services team (see contact information below).
- While our staff have phone connectivity, you may also email us using the contact form on the Union Benefits website or you can use our general email address below and we will ensure somebody gets back to you as soon as possible.

Note that our team is eager to help but we also ask for your patience and understanding as we are sometimes facing higher than normal call and email volumes during this time.

Keeping Healthy

You have heard it before; but it bears repeating.....Follow these simple practices to reduce the risk of contracting and/or spreading COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water thoroughly (minimum of 20 seconds) and often – particularly if you have been outside of your personal residence.
- Don't touch your face, eyes, nose or mouth with your hands – anytime, anywhere!
- Clean high-touch surfaces regularly – inside your home, in your car, entry doors, workspace, mobile device, remote controls, etc.

- Maintain a safe distance from other people (minimum of two meters) and avoid congregating in any groups of more than a few people.
- Avoid contact with others and stay home as much as possible. Don't travel anywhere unless absolutely necessary.
- Self-isolate and monitor for symptoms for 14 days if arriving from outside Canada.
- Visit reliable sources frequently for up to date healthcare information including:
 - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>
 - <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>
 - <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/>
 - <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

Contacting Union Benefits

Email

Go to our Contact page on our website and email us your question(s). It will get directed to the right person who will respond to you as soon as possible. You can also use info@unionbenefits.ca for your questions. To help staff answer your inquiries, please remember to include your name and Local number in the email.

Phone

Waterloo Main Office – 1-519-725-8818 or toll free 1-800-265-2568
Atlantic Canada Office – 1-902-407-4700 x 202
(Atlantic Canada Members can call either office for help!)

Business Hours

Waterloo Main Office - Monday to Thursday – 9:00 am to 5:00 pm; Friday - to 4:00pm
Atlantic Canada Office – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday – 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

One Last Thing

The Union Benefits management team will be closely monitoring the developing situation and will keep you informed via our website at www.unionbenefits.ca whether any further measures will be taken beyond the steps described here.

Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding. Finally, we thank the entire Union Benefits team for their determination and focus on helping our Members get the information and help they need. We have a fantastic team who really care!

On behalf of everyone at Union Benefits, we hope everyone remains safe and healthy through this challenging time. Together, we will help each other get through this!

Paul Gillis
President & CEO