

## 5 Benefit Predictions for the Fallout of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Benefits Canada, Kenneth MacDonald, April 28, 2020

We are all adjusting to the “new normal” and beginning to understand that life may not return to pre-coronavirus status for a long while – possibly never. In a recent article in Benefits Canada, Kenneth MacDonald explores life after the pandemic and what that could look like in the upcoming years ahead. We thought the article was worth sharing the “5 Benefit Predictions”, below:

### 1. An increase in dependant health and dental claims

Many workers have lost or will lose their jobs and benefits coverage. If an employee’s spouse has been terminated and no longer has benefits, their health and dental claims will start hitting their spouse’s plan from the first dollar.

Additionally, if the spouse’s plan was the first payer for their dependant children’s claims, the plan will also now be picking up these costs. It’s a bit like squeezing a balloon — as the workforce shrinks and businesses close, the number of individuals claiming under the remaining plans will increase, resulting in higher per-employee costs.

### 2. A spike in health and dental claims

While claims for dental, vision care and most paramedical services have reduced significantly, employers should expect to see claims spike upward once social distancing restrictions are eased. This may still be several months away, and employees may be reluctant to receive any hands-on treatment until the coronavirus risk has significantly diminished, but there will be pent up demand eventually.

### 3. An increase in the demand for virtual health care

Over the past few years, more health providers have gone online and to their mobile phones. About three years ago, several telemedicine providers burst onto the scene, making it easier for Canadians to seek treatment and advice from primary care providers like physicians and nurse practitioners about a range of medical issues all from the comfort of their home or office.

Other health practitioners, from psychologists to naturopaths, also now offer services virtually in addition to in-person. While interest in this area is growing, some employers and employees have yet to fully embrace virtual health care. But the coronavirus pandemic will undoubtedly help increase the real and perceived value of these services.

### 4. Mental health will take centre stage

Even those that aren’t infected with the coronavirus will be impacted by mental-health issues to varying degrees. While we’re all dealing with fear, uncertainty and social isolation, the number of Canadians also dealing with the loss of a loved one, financial stress, burnout, sleep deprivation, anxiety, depression, etc., has never been greater.

The demand for mental-health support now and in the near future will likely be greater than the supply of traditional in-person counselling available. Internet-based programs including cognitive behavioural therapy can help to fill that gap. Although many of these programs are supported by accredited mental-health professionals, they can be delivered to a far greater number of people with fewer staff resources.

### 5. An increase in long-term disability claims and costs

No one really knows what the long-term health prognosis will be for those stricken with the coronavirus, especially those with underlying medical conditions. Recovery may take months or longer for some affected employees, which could lead to higher long-term disability claims.

*If you have questions regarding any of the information provided above, please contact your ENCOMPASS advisor – always happy to help!*

250-763-6464  
service@encompassbenefits.com

1-800-665-5262  
www.encompassbenefits.com

# THE ENCOMPASS ADVISOR

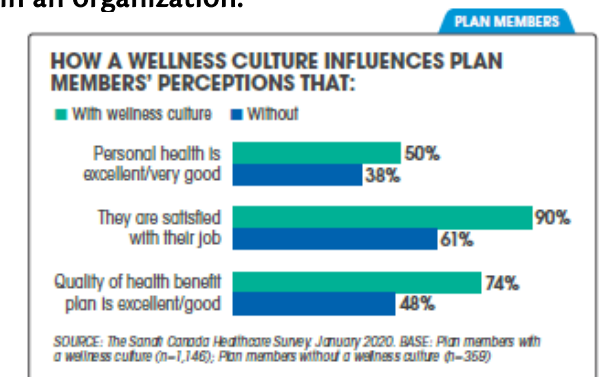
Benefit Your Business. Protect Your People.

Learning to navigate in the “new normal” - your advisor can help!

A healthy workplace environment is so important in an organization.

“Organizations that promote the health and well-being of their employees certainly stood out in the context of the labour shortage before the COVID-19 health crisis! A healthy workplace environment has never been more valuable to Canadian workers. Workplaces that are culturally focused on the well-being of their employees will do best when the economy returns to normal.”

Brigitte Marcoux – SSQ INSURANCE



### Key Takeaways from the 2020 Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey:

**For the plan sponsor ...** recognizing the importance of their health benefit plan’s role in supporting health and productivity.

**For the plan member ...** a health benefit plan and wellness culture was important in accepting a job offer or deciding to remain with an employer.

### In This Issue

Forward Thinking  
Page 2

Community Support  
2020 Scholarship Information and  
Food for Thought  
Page 3

Benefit Predictions  
Page 4

### US Benefit Information & Options

Many of our clients are Canadian employers with US and/or international employees. Naturally, these employees are just as important as national employees and need a solid health benefits plan in place as well.

Depending on your requirements, various plans provide a multitude of options including; Life, AD&D, STD & LTD, Health & Dental.

*If you would like more information on US Benefits, International Benefits or Expatriate/Inpatriate Health Plans; please contact your ENCOMPASS advisor.*

• Issue: Fall 2020 •

Follow Us!    

## Forward Thinking: 7 Steps into the Future

The 2020 edition of *The Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey* captures frontline perspectives on a sweeping range of topics regarding personal well-being, the workplace environment and health benefit plans. When asked to boil the findings down to the most important—and doable—action steps, members of the advisory board land on the following seven priorities.

### 1. Stay on Target: Analysis and Strategy

Results consistently show that plan sponsors who receive analyses on disease states and who have specific strategies for health benefit plans are more likely to support employee health and productivity. Yet only about one in five plan sponsors regularly receive such analyses or feels strongly about having specific objectives. Take small, iterative steps to secure ongoing leadership (internally and from providers), and dedicated time for strategic, evidence-based decision-making, stresses the advisory board.

### 2. Nurture a Wellness Culture

Plan members are more likely to be satisfied with their job and remain with their employer when a positive workplace environment and culture is in place. The top three factors for a positive wellness culture are: safety, good relationships with co-workers and a good relationship with the immediate supervisor.

### 3. Embrace Technology

From virtual care to targeted communications and healthcare apps, plan members are receptive and ready for more technology in personal health management—this translates into scalability and cost-effectiveness for plan sponsors. However, privacy concerns need to be addressed. As well, insurance carriers need to communicate why and how they can play a greater role in accessing health-related products and services, both within and outside of health benefit plans.

### 4. Focus on Younger Plan Members

Stress and chronic health conditions are far more likely to negatively affect the productivity of plan members who are aged 18 to 34. The advisory board urges a deeper dive into the reasons behind these results, especially given that millennials comprise the largest cohort of workers today. Resilience training, internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy and increased maximums for mental health counselling services are among the possible emerging supports for plan members of all ages.

### 5. Add Flexibility to Health Benefit Plans

Plan members with health spending accounts (HSAs) are more positive about the quality of their health benefit plan. The advisory board agrees that HSAs can cost-effectively add flexibility to health benefit plans as well as encourage accountability among plan members. However, communication efforts should position spending accounts as a supplement to the main health benefit plan, which guarantees coverage of essential items, (including prescription drugs), and provides insurance in the event of high healthcare costs or disability.

### 6. Consider these High-Value Benefits

Vaccinations against infectious diseases and virtual care top the list of possible new benefit offerings that are of interest to both plan members and plan sponsors—and likely much more so today, given the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. In virtual care, the advisory board recommends a focus on mental health in tandem with increased maximums for counselling services. Providers are well aligned in terms of levels of readiness to implement these benefits.

### 7. Move the Dial on Chronic Disease Management

Two-thirds of plan members have at least one chronic health condition and/or chronic pain, and more than half say it negatively affects job performance. For many chronic conditions, depression or anxiety often becomes an additional condition. Plan members in poor health are much more likely to say their health benefit plan does not meet their needs. Plan sponsors repeatedly indicate they would like their plans to do more to support those with chronic diseases. Year after year, survey results show we need to move the dial on chronic disease management—and steps one through six provided above, can help map the way.

## BLOG & NEWSLETTER

Keep current with news and articles on group benefits, pension, HR and industry trends.

Sign up for our e-Newsletter and check us out at:

[www.encompassbenefits.com](http://www.encompassbenefits.com)

## Community Support



### 2020 ENCOMPASS Scholarship

This past year has been especially difficult for students. Not only were they isolated from their friends and classmates, they also had to adjust to an online education model. We congratulate all students for persevering through the term and especially the graduates of 2020!

### Congratulations to Our Scholarship Recipients!

Robin Despres	Kelowna Christian Center Society	\$500 Scholarship
Arrianna Ward	Coastal Community Credit Union	\$500 Scholarship
Brooke Anderson	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako	\$100 Education Gift
Zachery Bumstead	Anodyne Electronics Manufacturing Corp.	\$100 Education Gift
Caitlyn Fields	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako	\$500 - 2019 Scholarship Deferred

## ENCOMPASS Global Project



### Justice Rising

At ENCOMPASS, we believe children should be allowed an education, no matter what their circumstances. In many war-torn countries of the world, that education is often interrupted or non-existent. Children are traumatized by the violence they see, or even worse, by being forced into conflicts as child soldiers. Justice Rising works in the Congo, Syria and Iraq by building schools where curriculum includes teaching peaceful reconciliation strategies and therapy to traumatized children.

This work is powerful and effective at bringing peace to war-torn regions, through the next generation.

**ENCOMPASS has pledged to match up to \$50,000** to help build and run these schools. We invite you to join us personally or through corporate donations. Ask an Advisor today how you can get involved in this work as every dollar you donate is matched for greater impact!

## Local Community Projects



There are over 4,500 children in the Central Okanagan living in a home where food might not be readily available, who are at risk of going to school hungry each day. Since 2009, Food for Thought aims to eliminate child hunger in the Central Okanagan, one child at a time, through various school programs. For more information on how to support this local initiative, please visit Hope for the Nations at: <https://www.hopeforthenations.com/project.aspx?asset=4053> or contact your advisor.