

Notes on the BC Budget

On February 28, 2023, British Columbia Finance Minister presented the 2023 budget, detailing significant investments in health care. This memo highlights items that may be of interest to plan administrators, employers, and members.

Health Care

The Budget includes over \$6.4 billion in new investments over the next three years for the public healthcare system. This includes over \$270 million for cancer care to enhance access to screening, early detection, and diagnostic and treatment services. Additionally, \$1 billion over three years will go towards recruiting, retaining, and supporting more doctors, nurses, allied health and health science professionals into the system.

Mental Health

The Province is investing \$867 million more to strengthen mental health, addictions and treatment services. This includes new investments across the full continuum of care from prevention, harm reduction, safe supply, and withdrawal management to treatment and recovery.

Prescription Contraception

The Budget includes \$119 million over three years to make prescription contraception free for all B.C. residents starting April 1, 2023. The program will fully cover prescription contraception products, copper IUDs and Plan B®. British Columbia will then be the first jurisdiction in Canada to provide free prescription contraception to its residents. To support access, the provincial government is also working with the College of Pharmacists of BC on regulations to expand the ability of pharmacists to prescribe medications, including contraception, by spring 2023.

Disability Assistance

Budget 2023 includes \$558 million more over three years to increase support to income and disability assistance clients. This includes increasing the shelter rate (a component of the income and disability assistance rate) by \$125 per month. This is the first time the shelter rate has been increased since 2007 and represents a 33 per cent increase to the maximum shelter rate for a single person. Supplements, which provide additional support to clients who face an emergency need, have specific health needs, or to address other additional costs, will also be increased. Finally, the earnings exemption for an individual on disability assistance has been increased by \$1,200 per year.

B.C. Family Benefit

The budget increases the maximum annual B.C. Family Benefit to \$1,750 for a family's first child, \$1,100 for a second child, and \$900 for each subsequent child, effective July 1, 2023. The maximum annual benefit is phased out for families with adjusted family net income over \$27,354. The budget increases the minimum benefit to

\$775 for a family's first child, \$750 for a second child, and \$725 for each subsequent child for families with adjusted family net income of more than \$27,354 and less than \$87,533, effective July 1, 2023. The budget also announces a maximum annual supplement of \$500 to single-parent families in addition to the maximum annual benefit, effective July 1, 2023.

Insurance premiums

The budget announces that electronic filing and payments under the Insurance Premium Tax Act will be mandatory, effective January 1, 2024.

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