



SRA

SASKATCHEWAN RETIREES ASSOCIATION

THE

SPRING 2024

ADVISOR

SAVE THE DATE - 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The SRA will host the 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) on May 23, 2024, starting at 10:00am.

The meeting will offer options for participating in person or virtually through Zoom. If you attending in person, we are finalizing the location and will notify you prior to the meeting date.

The Board of Directors will report on the financial operations of the 2023 fiscal year, plus provide updates from the various committees on activities, projects and a special initiative where the SRA joined with the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism (SSM).

Each year, four director terms expire on the twelve-person Board. By the SRA bylaws, any member interested in serving a three-year term can seek nomination. If you are interested in volunteering to serve on the Board or be considered for a committee, please contact skretireesinfo@gmail.com.

2024-25 will be an important, exciting time for the SRA as we approach the 50th anniversary of the association. Formed in 1975, the founders, our honorary lifetime members and all current, active members continue to express support and confidence for the achievements of the SRA.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the AGM in May!



SRA HEALTH PLAN

REVIEWING PRESCRIPTION DRUG USAGE

On an annual cycle, SRA looks at the Health Plan and considers member feedback for changes, trends in the marketplace and our claims experience. With recent growth, both the Health and Dental Plans have experienced some challenges balancing the added members and the growth in claims. This has led to premium rate increases during 2022-24, greater than typical increases driven by inflation. Over 50% of the claims relate to prescription drugs coverage, the most significant part of the health plan. Our goal of providing a comprehensive benefit plan with affordable pricing has been difficult to maintain.

With this background, in 2023, the SRA partnered with GMS to conduct a review of the current provisions of the prescription drug coverage, part of the SRA Health Plan. CUBIC, a Canadian consulting company, was asked to look at the usage and potential future cost implications for premium rates based on the 2022-23 policy year of the SRA Drug Plan.

All prescription drug claims were collected, analysed and grouped with these observations for the July 2022-June 2023 period:

- Members' claims increased by 10.4%, with paid claims increasing by 11.3% to \$2,955,058.
- There were 4220 members who claimed for the last two years combined with 387 that started claiming in 2023.
- Regular, maintenance drugs account for 97% of the increased claims costs.
- New, high-cost specialty drugs are a growing part of the claims, with costs increasing by 26.5% over the period.

- Only 6.7% of members reached the \$1700.00 annual maximum for drug coverage.
- Diabetes, pneumonia and antidepressant drugs showed the largest increase in claims and costs.
- The average drug claim per member increased to \$604.06 during 2022-23.
- New, specialty drug claims increased by 26.5% over the period.

With these factors, the SRA is looking for ways to slow the rate of cost increases to members. Projections for specialty drugs claims when added to the regular, maintenance claims suggest significant annual cost increases over the next few years.

We are providing these findings to help inform you of the challenges ahead to balance pricing with affordability. What is also unclear at this point is the potential offset to costs by the future introduction of a national pharmacare program, recently announced by the Government of Canada. Over the next while, we will be working with GMS to make decisions that are focused on the continued financial stability of the health and dental plans. We will continue to communicate with you as we move forward together.



SRA – FUTURE STATE POSSIBILITIES

2024 is a time when the Association is looking forward. After almost fifty years of operations, the Board of Directors is planning ahead for the next generation of retirees.

Over the course of 2024, several significant projects have started that may create new and different opportunities.

A special working group focused on **Growth and Promotion** of the SRA was formed. The direction is to consider what the SRA needs to do to continue to attract members from the many Saskatchewan public sector organizations. While our member growth has continued to increase at rates of 7-11% over recent years, we are looking to understand what growth targets are needed to sustain the organization over the long term. As government makes changes to its workforce, the changes can affect the size of the available pool of retirees. Over the months ahead, the SRA will be looking for innovative ways to connect with future retirees so that when retirement occurs, the SRA is the preferred choice for services, including health and dental benefits.

The Board has engaged Praxis Consulting to conduct an **Operational Review** of the SRA. A formal review of the approach

and processes used to operate a volunteer-led organization has not been completed for many years. With the potential for more growth, a decision was made to look internally at how the SRA manages its affairs as well as consider similar, external models that might provide some insights into potential improvements to how to conduct business. Various options are being explored, with a forward-looking view.

At present, the SRA offers these services to members:

- Comprehensive medical coverage through a competitive **Health and Dental Plan**. Coverage includes prescription drugs, vision care, hearing aids, health practitioners, out-of-country travel plus basic and restorative dental care.
- Regular **monitoring** of proposed changes to **public sector pension plans** in Canada with communications to members about the changes and potential implications for members.
- **Advocacy** in conjunction with like-minded partners focused on raising issues of importance to older adults in Saskatchewan. Often issues are raised through the SRA organizational membership

with the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism (SSM).

- Opportunities for **volunteerism** through participation in SRA committees and the Board of Directors.
- **Information sessions** offered virtually to members on topics of interest, often identified by the SRA membership.
- **Participation** in influencing the direction of the SRA through the democratic process at the Annual General Meeting plus feedback through the SRA website and Advisor newsletter

Members' expectations for services are expanding based on recent surveys conducted by the SRA. While your confidence remains strong, the SRA believes we need to ensure our operations are effective to continue to meet your needs.

Details of this review are expected to be available at the AGM in May 2024, where there will be opportunity to share the findings with members.



MEMBER ASSISTANCE PLAN CHANGES

As part of the SRA Health Plan, wellness counselling support has been provided for mental health, relationships and emotional challenges through the Member Assistance Plan (MAP) provisions. GMS has made changes to their service provider effective March 1, 2024. The changes will expand the services for members as outlined here:



GMS Care Network
(replacing Homewood Health)

Health) has health and life services that you've come to expect in an assistance program, and exciting new features. GMS Care Network services are provided by a service agreement with Greenshields Canada.

Here's a quick look at what is offered:

- **Virtual Primary Care.** Talk to a Canadian-licensed general practitioner by phone, video or text message. Use this telemedicine service to get help with minor medical needs, digital prescriptions, and more. Plus, you own and manage your health record of these consultations.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Support.** Talk to an expert about stress, anxiety or depression,

or consult about legal matters, financial planning, career and life transitions by video, phone, or in person. Crisis support is available 24/7/365. Don't feel that your provider is a good fit for you? You can un-match yourself and choose a new provider. It's that simple.

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.** Support your mental health with the self-directed online cognitive behavioural therapy program.

Note: *If you are in the middle of getting help, it's important that you continue working with the professionals you trust. If you have started a counselling or wellbeing support program with Homewood Health before March 1, 2024, you'll be able to complete your program with Homewood Health.*



MEMBER COMMENTS

Have a question? Suggestion? Need information? Let us know!

Saskatchewan Retirees Assoc. Inc.
c/o Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street Regina, SK
S4S 0B1

306-584-5552
www.saskretirees.org
skretireesinfo@gmail.com

