

Atlantic Canada Health Care Coalition Society Update

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ANNOUNCEMENT



Atlantic Canada Health Care Coalition Society

Union Benefits Purchasing Power

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It was four years ago in July that the Atlantic Canada Health Care Coalition Society was incorporated says Fern Tardif, Executive Director for the Coalition.

The Coalition has grown from 4 founding groups and 2000 members to 57 groups with 160,000 members and with spouses and dependents total more than 450,000 people from across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland.

The success of the organization comes from encouraging plan members to use a preferred network of pharmacies for their prescription drug needs. By doing so, the Coalition can negotiate drug plan savings, lower administration fees, and create co-pay based incentives with the pharmacy benefit managers.

The first big step towards the creation of the Coalition took place when Tardif negotiated a Preferred Provider agreement with Managed Health Care Services, the only pharmacy-owned and operated benefits management company in Canada. Members and their families get coverage on drugs at Sobeys in-store pharmacies, the Lawton's group of pharmacies, and Sobeys pharmacies by-mail with their MHCSI drug card, as well as the use of a Lawton's front store discount card.

With a growing number of people willing to use what the provider has to offer, costs can be negotiated and reduced. The more members we have, the better purchasing power we have with our providers Tardif says, and the Coalition continues its efforts to expand its members and add more providers. For example, the Coalition has a Preferred Provider Agreement with the Co-operators Insurance Company that provide a group rate for Home and Auto insurance for Coalition members.

The Coalition is made up of members and retirees from Unions across Atlantic Canada, such as various construction Locals, NSGEU, CUPE Locals in N.S., N.B., and P.E.I., PSAC- Atlantic, CEP Locals and the Nova Scotia Government Retirees and Employees Association. A full list of the member groups are on the Coalitions website.

In the early days, it was a challenge communicating all the merits of the Coalition to potential members, but once the ACHCCS established a proven track record, it was much easier to demonstrate the point. Now Tardif can consult the Coalition records and statistics during presentations to give an example of the type of savings that can be achieved with the plan.

As far as he knows, there is no other Coalition in Canada with the purchasing power and savings potential of the ACHCCS. The Coalition now has its own official web site (www.ACHCCS.ca) as a communications platform and it also is preparing to reach out to more Unions and benefit plans by spreading the work at industry conferences and conventions.

As Tardif continues recruiting more groups into the Coalition, the menu of products and services will continue to expand. He is currently working on including a vision care provider into the available coverage, as well as a life insurance option.

If there are Unions, benefit plans, or associations who are interested in becoming part of the Coalition, or other benefit providers who would like to work with the Coalition, they can contact Tardif at the Coalition office at 902-479-1980, or email ferntardif@eastlink.ca.



- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, **Fern Tardif**