

Elected Officials Participation in Employee Benefit Plans

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Administrative Responsibility: Human Resources

Policy Statement

The Elected Officials of Strathcona County are required to commit substantial time and effort to the duties and responsibilities of their elected office. They may, as a result of this responsibility, have to forfeit opportunities to participate in, or continue to participate in, employer sponsored employee benefit plans.

Elected Officials will participate in the same employee benefits package as the County's municipal classified staff (excluding the Local Authorities Pension Plan), and with the same cost-share structure. Participation in the plans will follow the guidelines established by Human Resources for the County's municipal, classified staff; and is subject to and governed by the terms and conditions of the policies or contracts entered into with the underwriters of the plan.

Strathcona County may, from time to time, amend components of the benefit package. Changes in the plans, cost-share structure or premiums which are implemented for municipal classified staff, also apply to Elected Officials.

Guidelines

A. Benefit Plan Coverage

1. Participation in the benefit plan is mandatory, however:
 - a) Extended Health Care and Dental Health Care benefits may be waived with proof of enrolment in another group plan, and
 - b) Elected Officials may choose to decline enrolment in the Long Term Disability (LTD) plan. This decision is irreversible; regardless of any future life events or loss of other coverage.

2. Payment for the Elected Official's portion of the benefit premiums will be made by deduction from their pay. Premiums for earnings-related benefits will be calculated on the Elected Official's base annual earnings (including the 1/3 non-taxable portion). LTD premiums and benefit level will be based on the equivalent fully taxable salary as the LTD benefit if fully taxable.
3. Newly Elected Officials will be eligible for benefit coverage on the first day of the month following their election.
4. Benefit coverage will cease on the last day of the month in which the Elected Official ceases to hold office; except if the elected official is in receipt of LTD benefits from the County's plan at that time.

Following is information regarding benefits that are unique to elected officials (short-term disability and registered retirement savings plan).

B. Short-Term Disability Coverage:

1. Short-term disability means a medical condition which prevents an Elected Official from performing the normal duties of the office for a period of more than thirty (30) calendar days.
2. Short-Term disability pay will be paid at the Elected Official's normal remuneration, excluding vehicle or other allowances and mileage. (Absences of less than thirty (30) calendar days have no effect on remuneration.)
3. An Elected Official may apply for short term disability pay by providing a medical certificate to the County's Disability Management. The certificate must indicate they cannot carry out the normal duties and responsibilities of their office. The medical certificate must indicate the start date of the medical absence and the anticipated return-to-office date; and must be from a health care practitioner, practicing within the scope of their profession, and registered and accredited with any of the following:
 - College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
 - College of Alberta Psychologists
 - College of Midwives of Alberta
4. Short term disability pay is available for a period up to ninety (90) calendar days from the date of disability. If the illness continues beyond 90 days, the Elected Official may be eligible for Long Term Disability benefits.
5. The Elected Official's group benefit plan and RRSP contributions will remain in effect at their normal cost-shares while in receipt of short term disability pay.
6. Elected Officials cannot claim any other fees or costs from Strathcona County while receiving short term disability pay.

7. Elected Officials on short term disability pay should be aware that working (fulfilling any of the duties of their office or working elsewhere) during this period may jeopardize their application for long term disability benefits.
8. If an election is held within the 90 day period and the Elected Official is not re-elected, short term disability pay will cease.
9. The amount of short term disability pay provided by this plan will be reduced by the amount of benefits received from other income replacement plans that the Elected Official may have.
10. Elected Officials must comply with the guidelines and requirements established by Human Resources in order to remain eligible for short term disability.

C. Registered Retirement Savings Plan

1. Elected Officials under the age of 72 may choose to participate in the County's group Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP)
2. Participation is optional and subject to Canada Revenue Agency rules.
3. Shared contributions will be based on the 2/3 taxable portion of the Elected Official's base remuneration; up to the maximum allowable RRSP contribution as determined by Canada Revenue Agency.
4. If an Elected Official chooses to participate in the RRSP plan, the County's share of the contributions will be 1% higher than the Elected Official's share. The contribution level is at the discretion of the Elected Official; however the total contribution may not be higher than the maximum allowed by Canada Revenue Agency.
5. At no time will contribution levels be permitted which would be in excess of those made to the Local Authorities Pension Plan.
6. The County's contributions are immediately vested to the benefit of the Elected Official.
7. Elected Officials are responsible for the investment decisions made regarding their RRSP.
8. Elected Officials are responsible for taking into account any other RRSP contributions they may be making. The County cannot be held liable for any penalties the Elected Official may incur for over-contributing. It may be in the best interest of the Elected Official to consult with an independent financial advisor before making a decision.