cafii acifa
The Canadian Association of Financial Institutions in Insurance | L'association canadienne des institutions financières en assurance

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
(416) 494-9224 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

CAFII ALERTS WEEKLY DIGEST: March 25 to April 1, 2022

April 1, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION AND STRATEGY NEWS

Canada Needs A Modern Privacy Law Before Allowing Open Banking

Opinion By Rita Trichur, The Globe and Mail, March 25, 2022

Change tends to occur at a snail's pace in Canada – and for once that might not be such a bad thing. The Trudeau government is taking another baby step toward spurring more competition in the financial-services sector by appointing Abraham Tachjian as its open banking czar. Mr. Tachjian, who is a digital doyen, now faces the laborious task of developing a made-in-Canada open banking regime. Open banking, of course, is a system that would allow consumers and small businesses to securely share their financial data among financial services providers such as banks and accredited fintechs. Also known as consumer-directed finance, it heralds the promise of giving Canadians more control over their financial data and making it easier for them to switch lenders, open accounts and use new digital tools to manage their money. It's all very enticing, especially since our banks always seem to find new ways to squeeze more service fees out of us. That's why, dear readers, it pains me to be an open banking buzz kill – at least for now. As easy as it is to be seduced by newfangled technologies, there are risks involved with any kind of financial innovation. (Americans learned that lesson the hard way during the financial crisis of 2007-09.) That's why we should be relieved that Ottawa isn't rushing headlong into open banking despite mounting pressure from financial technology startups, or fintechs. This might be the one instance where our legislators' knack for puttering is actually a blessing in disguise. The fact is, the federal government should modernize our privacy laws before giving open banking the green light. Although Ottawa is promising to strengthen privacy rules, its legislative overhaul should begin immediately and inform Mr. Tachjian's work on open banking. Although logic often escapes our elected officials, it should be obvious that giving fintechs easy access to our confidential banking information without proper privacy protections could spell disaster for consumers. This isn't the message that fintechs want us to hear. According to those entrepreneurs, Ottawa should introduce open banking lickety-split because Canada is already a laggard compared with other countries, including Britain. "We have seen the kinds of benefits that come with open banking in other jurisdictions, and Canada has already fallen behind our peers," reads their recent open letter to the government. "Canadians will be poorer for it, and the Canadian finance sector will be weaker for lack of innovation and competition." Of course, fintechs are in a hurry for open banking – their business models depend on accessing our private financial data. But rushing full steam ahead isn't the way to build trust with consumers. Although a federal advisory committee on open banking has provided recommendations on limiting the scope of customer information accessible by fintechs and on holding companies liable for data breaches, those proposals are simply not a substitute for strong privacy laws. As much as Canadians crave choice, Ottawa cannot risk putting the cart before the horse on open banking. Our privacy laws must be updated first.

Read Story (Subscription Required): https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/commentary/article-open-banking-fintechs-canada-privacy/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Top%20Business%20Headlines&utm_content=2022-3-25_7&utm_term=&utm_campaign=newsletter&cu_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeeFJOJkTb

Back to Table Of Contents

What The Federal Liberal-NDP Deal Means For P&C Insurers

By Alyssa DiSabatino, Canadian Underwriter, March 22, 2022

https://www.canadianunderwriter.ca/earnings-ratings/what-the-federal-liberal-ndp-deal-means-for-pc-insurers-1004219157/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newcom&utm_campaign=CanadianUnderwriterWeek&utm_content=20220325152908&hash=6d73923380f292a40dc042b455f0fde3

The federal Liberal party's campaign promise to impose a surtax on the financial sector is one step closer to being implemented, which means higher taxes for P&C insurers.

However, the exact structure of the surtax has yet to be clarified.

As part of a deal to keep the federal Liberals' minority government in power until 2025, the NDP party has called on the Liberals to move ahead with a 3% surtax on big banks and insurance companies' "excess profits," and called for a broadening of the surtax to include big oil companies and big box stores in a debate on March 21, ahead of the 2022 federal budget.

In their 2021 election platform, the Liberals proposed to raise the corporate income tax rate for banks and insurance companies from 15% to 18% on all earnings above $1 billion.

The party promised to "raise corporate income taxes on the largest, most profitable banks and insurance companies who earn more than $1 billion per year," as well as requiring these same companies to pay a temporary Canada Recovery Dividend.

The proposal recognized that these sectors "have recovered faster and stronger than many other industries," according to the campaign platform.

What is meant by "excess profits," "profits," or even "earn" is not clear. For example, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions' financial data differentiates between P&C insurers' net premiums written (premiums earned before expenses) and net income (profit) for the year. The Liberal government has not specified which figure would potentially be taxed higher.

As per Canadian Underwriter's previous reporting, most Canadian P&C insurers do not earn nearly $1 billion a year in premiums, let alone profits, and OSFI's 2021 Q4 data bears this out.

For example, Canada's largest P&C insurer, Intact, totalled $8.9 billion premiums written in 2021 (premiums earned before expenses such as claims payouts), but $550 million net income, putting them well above a $1-billion surtax on threshold in one regard (premiums earned before expenses), but well below it in another (profit).

A senior government official previously said the surtaxes would be addressed in the 2022 budget. Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland is expected to announce a budget date in the coming days.

In an email statement, the Insurance Bureau of Canada said they are working with the government to address the corporate tax rules.

"As we look ahead to the economic recovery for our country, the industry intends to work with government to ensure Canadians are supported. IBC and its members continue to work with government to ensure that corporate tax rules are fair and equitable."

IBC emphasizes the role that P&C insurers played during the pandemic for consumers.

"Canada's P&C insurers have been with Canadians every step of the way over the course of the pandemic and will continue to be there as our country continues to recover. Since the beginning of the pandemic, P&C insurers have provided $3.7 billion in relief to their customers in the form of refunds, re-rating policies, deferring premiums, among many other methods of support," the statement reads.

"The P&C industry's efforts have provided help to Canadians when they needed it most. The value of the P&C industry's relief measures is unparalleled in the financial services sector."

Canadian Underwriter has reached out to the Liberal Party for clarification on which figure would be taxed and is awaiting further comment.

REGULATOR/POLICY-MAKER NEWS

Standards Bodies Agree To Collaborate On Sustainability Disclosures

The IFRS Foundation And The Global Reporting Initiative Hope The Move Will Reduce The Reporting Burden For Companies

By Investment Executive Staff, March 24, 2022

https://www.investmentexecutive.com/news/from-the-regulators/standards-bodies-agree-to-collaborate-on-sustainability-disclosures/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=nl&utm_content=investmentexecutive&utm_campaign=INT-EN-morning&hash=6d73923380f292a40dc042b455f0fde3

The IFRS Foundation and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) will be co-ordinating their standard-setting activities to help harmonize the sustainability reporting landscape, the organizations announced on Thursday, March 24.

Members of the Foundation and the Initiative will join each other's consultative bodies, and the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) and the Global Sustainability Standards Board will co-ordinate their work programs and standard-setting activities.

The organizations said they hoped their co-ordination would reduce the reporting burden for companies while putting financial and sustainability reporting on an equal footing.

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

"At COP26, we heard strong support for consolidation in the sustainability reporting landscape. The work of the ISSB and its global baseline concept will help deliver this objective for the capital markets, whilst this agreement with GRI will help ensure capital market standards are developed in a way that minimizes the reporting burden for those companies also using GRI standards," said Erkki Liikanen, chairman of the IFRS Foundation Trustees, in a statement.

Next week, the ISSB will publish proposed climate and general sustainability-related disclosure requirements that are intended to form the global baseline for climate-related disclosures, the organization said. The initiative is supported by the International Organization of Securities Commissions, among others.

Earlier this week, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission released proposals that would mandate climate-risk disclosures by public companies.

In October 2021, the Canadian Securities Administrators published their proposed approach to issuers' climate-related disclosure, and the associated consultation generated about 130 comment letters. While the notion of explicit disclosure requirements targeting climate-related risks is widely supported, the details of what should be disclosed remain hotly contested.

Regulators Must Act Now To Forestall Climate Disaster

Financial Regulation Can Play A Significant Role In Mitigating Climate Change

Editorial By Investment Executive Editorial Board. This editorial appears in the March 2022 issue of Investment Executive.

https://www.investmentexecutive.com/newspaper_/comment-insight/regulators-must-act-now-to-forestall-climate-disaster/

Financial regulation can't end military conflict or defeat a global pandemic. But it can, and should, play a significant role in confronting the defining challenge of our time: climate change.

The latest report from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), released at the end of February, paints an increasingly dire picture of the planet. The IPCC report said climate hazards posed by global warming — such as floods, droughts, and wildfires — are materializing more quickly and severely than expected. The report also warned that adaptation efforts may be thwarted once the average global temperature rise exceeds 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The report closely linked climate change with concerns such as biodiversity loss, economic inequality, and food insecurity — in short, human survival.

The financial sector has a critical obligation to help address this crisis by allocating capital towards sustainability, climate risk mitigation, and adaptation. To that end, regulators have begun to act on several fronts.

In Canada and elsewhere, central banks are engaging in climate risk-related stress-testing for financial institutions. Those exercises have confirmed that climate change represents a major source of systemic risk, and that expected losses due to climate-related risks are likely to grow exponentially. In other words, acting sooner rather than later is necessary to avoid the direst outcomes, both environmentally and financially.

Securities regulators, including the Canadian Securities Administrators (CSA), have also begun tackling the issue from the perspective of disclosure, with the aim of illuminating issuers' climate-related risks and opportunities so that investors can allocate capital in a way that favours sustainability.

To that end, the CSA initiated a consultation last year on proposed climate-related disclosures for issuers. And, earlier this year, it added guidance for investment funds on ESG disclosure practices.

However, these efforts are too weak. Largely voluntary disclosures won't allow investors to make informed decisions or enable them to finance a sustainable future.

So far, regulators are too worried about inflicting short-term costs while heavily discounting the existential benefits of early action.

Recent events, from war to public health crises, demonstrate how fragile civilization is. Decisive, principled action to avert even greater calamity is needed now.

Misrepresenting Continuing Education Credits Ends In $1,500 Fine For Agent

By Kate McCaffery, Insurance Portal, March 25, 2022

After reporting to the Alberta Insurance Council (AIC) that her continuing education (CE) credit requirements were met for renewing her certificate of authority when the courses were not actually completed, Rama Warnes is being sanctioned by the Alberta Insurance Council as part of the Council's annual CE audit. The agent is being fined $1,500 after she erroneously reported courses that she had not completed. In the Council's decision, Warnes reportedly wrote to investigators to say that "it was a mystery how the error happened, and the system seemed to accept the courses, so no flags were raised in my mind at the time for renewal." The Council says "it was clear that the agent did not complete the CE hours that were required and subsequently reported on an agent's renewal applications. It was equally clear to the Council that the representations were more than a mere inadvertent error. As CE course providers are required to keep detailed records with respect to individuals who attend and complete their CE courses, the agent could've simply contacted the course provider prior to inputting the CE courses for the renewal period," the Council wrote. "The acceptance of CE credits in the AIC system does not mitigate the agent's responsibility to accurately input the CE information."

Read Story (Subscription Required): https://insurance-portal.ca/life/misrepresenting-continuing-education-credits-ends-in-1500-fine-for-agent/?utm_source=sendinblue&utm_campaign=daily_complete_202203-28&utm_medium=email

DIVERSITY/INCLUSION/FIGHTING SYSTEMIC RACISM NEWS

Proxy Advisory Firm Calls For Vote Against Swiss Re Chair

By Terry Gangcuangco, Insurance Business Canada, March 31, 2022

https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/ca/news/breaking-news/proxy-advisory-firm-calls-for-vote-against-swiss-re-chair-400769.aspx?utm_source=GA&e=YnJlbmRhbi53eWNrc0BjYWZpaS5jb20&utm_medium=20220331&utm_campaign=IBCW-MorningBriefing-20220331&utm_content=9B8F63D4-69B1-4D0C-AE64-59C8BBAFABC8&tu=9B8F63D4-69B1-4D0C-AE64-59C8BBAFABC8

Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS) is urging Swiss Re investors not to have Sergio Ermotti re-elected as chair.

A report by the Financial Times said ISS described Swiss Re's board as "insufficiently gender-diverse," with the proxy advisory firm recommending that shareholders of the major re-insurer oppose the board's proposal to keep Ermotti's chairmanship.

Swiss Re, which is holding its annual general meeting (AGM) on April 13, is overseen by a board of directors made up of 10 men and three women.

On March 17, the company stated: "In line with Swiss Re's diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy, the board of directors places a particular importance on increasing the proportion of women in leadership positions.

"Therefore, gender diversity plays a key role in all new board appointments. At the 2022 AGM, to further underline this conviction, the board of directors will formally commit to increasing the female representation at board level to at least 30% by the 2023 AGM."

ISS, however, maintains its stand, citing years of Swiss Re not meeting the minimum 30% industry benchmark.

As Another School Takes Down Sir John's A's Name, Canadians Don't Support 'Rewriting' History

A Leger Poll Conducted For Postmedia Found That A Majority Of Canadians Oppose The Trend Towards Purging Memorials To Figures With 'Questionable' Biographies

By Tristin Hopper, National Post, March 31, 2022

https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/as-another-school-takes-down-sir-johns-as-name-canadians-dont-support-rewriting-history

As yet another school removes the name of founding Canadian Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, polls show that Canadians are not on board with these types of name changes.

On Wednesday, Ontario's Peel District School Board voted to rename Sir John A. MacDonald Public School in Brampton to Nibi Emosaawdang Public School. The new name is an Anishinaabe word meaning "water walker," and is in reference to Josephine Mandamin, a residential school survivor who organized days-long "water walks" around the shores of the Great Lakes to promote water stewardship. She died in 2019.

School board documents indicate that the name was suggested by an elder with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, after they were approached by school officials for ideas on a new name. "The name lends itself to environmental activism … and centres the themes of reconciliation, equity, and social justice which are aligned to the Peel District School board's commitments to anti-colonialism, anti-racism, anti-oppression," reads a staff recommendation to trustees.

The Brampton school is far from the first institution to scrub itself of Macdonald's name in recent years. Four separate statues of Macdonald have come down since 2018: three due to city council votes and one due to "Defund the Police" protesters in Montreal. In the same period, several schools have removed Macdonald's name, including one in Pickering, Ontario, which also replaced his name with that of Josephine Mandamin.

A Leger poll conducted in February for Postmedia found that a majority of Canadians opposes the nation-wide trend towards purging memorials to figures with "questionable" biographies. And it's not necessarily because they favour a whitewashed version of Canadian history, but rather the exact opposite: a national story that confronts the evils of its players rather than trying to bury them.

Forty-four per cent wanted a version of history that told the "good and bad," but didn't "pretend" that the country's key framers "did not have a positive role in Canada's history." Another thirty per cent opposed what they called a "rewriting" of history just because the figures involved "do not look good by today's standards."

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

A 2020 survey by Leger similarly found that three quarters of Canadians objected to the growing trend of "spontaneous" statue topplings of Canadian historical figures. But it wasn't because respondents necessarily liked the figures getting toppled.

When asked whether Canada should use less anarchic means to remove memorials to "racist" historical figures, the poll respondents were surprisingly divided. Only 47 per cent expressed full-throated opposition to the notion, against 34 per cent who supported it.

Macdonald frequently tops the list of Canadian historical villains for the simple fact that he's been the most influential.

It was mainly Macdonald's doing to unite a scattering of British colonies into a continent-spanning nation independent of the United States. It's also largely on Macdonald that one of Canada's first acts was to take a continent's worth of autonomous Indigenous peoples and shunt them into a form of internal exile from which they've never fully emerged.

Macdonald directly oversaw the forcible relocation of First Nations onto reserves, he massively expanded the Indian Residential School system, and in his final years he approved the pass system, a 70-year federal policy that would see First Nations people arrested if they left their reserve without approval from their Indian Agent.

The 2021 discovery of unmarked graves at residential school sites across Canada focused an unprecedented amount of public attention on the harms that Macdonald's policies imposed. An Abacus Data poll conducted for the Assembly of First Nations at the time found that 58 per cent of respondents favoured renaming buildings and institutions carrying the monikers of "architects of the residential school system."

The most notable example was the former Langevin Block, the Parliament Hill building housing the office of the prime minister. It was previously named for Hector-Louis Langevin, a prominent Conservative politician who is in the parliamentary record saying that "Indian" children needed to be separated from their families for schooling lest they "remain savages."

An Ipsos poll from last summer similarly painted a picture of a country horrified by the discoveries of unmarked graves. Of respondents, 80 per cent said they were "shocked" by the news.

But while 77 per cent of Canadians supported a national day of remembrance for the Residential School victims, responses became far more complex when the question was turned towards whether it should define the legacy of Macdonald. Fifty nine per cent of respondents reported that Macdonald's role as the Father of Canada "outweighs his role in the creation of residential schools."

Even among Indigenous respondents, 43 per cent did not favour a wholesale removal of Macdonald memorials.

Back to Table Of Contents

Respondents to the recent Leger poll similarly seemed to reflect a new national understanding of what the Indian Residential School system meant to Indigenous Canadians. When asked whether Macdonald "deserves to be treated differently" than other backers of Indian Residential Schools having their names scrubbed from public buildings, the poll was almost perfectly divided: Forty per cent agreed, 37 per cent did not.

Overall, though, 67 per cent of respondents retained a "favourable" impression of Macdonald. The sentiment was almost identical between white Canadians (67 per cent) and non-white Canadians (65 per cent).

Nevertheless, the love for Macdonald was decidedly lukewarm when he was ranked against some of his fellow travellers in Canadian history books.

Louis Riel — who was executed by Macdonald's government for leading a Metis insurrection against Canada — got a 76 per cent favourability ranking. Agnes MacPhail, the first woman elected to the House of Commons, got a 75 per cent rating. "Father of Medicare" Tommy Douglas emerged with 85 per cent.

But all three, of course, have their own historical skeletons in the closet.

Riel saw himself as a religious prophet ordained to bring polygamy to Canada in order to "teach women once again that the only way for them to be pleasing to God and their husbands … is to sincerely practice the virtues of modesty, thriftiness, and kindness." MacPhail and Douglas publicly shared the view of many progressives at the time that society should be uplifted via state-controlled limits on human breeding.

NEWS ABOUT/FROM CAFII MEMBERS AND/OR PARENT COMPANIES

Manulife To Open All Canadian Offices For Staffers From April 25: Memo

By Manya Saini and Nichola Saminather, Reuters, March 29, 2022

[Manulife to open all Canada offices for staffers from April 25 - memo (msn.com)]

Canadian life and health insurer Manulife Financial Corp said on Tuesday, March 29 that fully vaccinated employees can return to its offices across Canada from April 25 on a voluntary basis amid a fall in COVID-19 infections.

The country's biggest insurer has asked staffers to return under a flexible hybrid model with certain days of the week designated for remote work, according to an internal memo seen by Reuters.

Guidelines on mask mandates and physical distancing will be set in line with local regulations, the memo said.

Several financial firms across Canada and the United States that had postponed their back-to-office plans late last year are now looking to re-open offices and bring back employees with fresh coronavirus guidelines.

Earlier this month, Manulife had opened select office locations as a part of its return-to-office plans in Canada, after COVID-19 cases in the country declined.

Canadian lender Bank of Nova Scotia issued a similar guidance in February, allowing staffers to return to the majority of its Canadian offices on a voluntary basis from mid-March.

Sun Life Imposing Vaccine Mandate On All In-Person Staff

By Andrew Lawton, True North, March 23, 2022

https://tnc.news/2022/03/23/sun-life-imposing-vaccine-mandate-on-all-in-person-staff/

One of Canada's largest financial services companies is abandoning its rapid testing program and making COVID-19 vaccination mandatory for all in-office staff.

Sun Life Financial is requiring all employees at its financial centres to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of May 1, according to an internal memo obtained by True North.

"All FC Field Leaders and FC Staff must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as they are required to work on-site at a Sun Life location," the memo says.

The current mandate, which the Toronto-based company adopted in August, allows unvaccinated employees to take part in a rapid screening program. That program will no longer be available for office-based employees.

Employees have until April 15 to confirm they're vaccinated, or they "may be placed on unpaid leave," the memo warns.

Advisors who don't regularly work out of a Sun Life facility will be required to be vaccinated or take part in Sun Life's rapid screening program in order to visit a financial centre or a Sun Life corporate office.

Sun Life did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

An unvaccinated Sun Life employee told True North they expect to be fired when the new policy kicks in on May 1.

"I'm deeply hurt and disappointed by Sun Life's mandatory injection policy," said the employee, who has asked not to be named for fear of retribution. "Starting May 1, they can fire me for making a private medical decision to not take the COVID-19 vaccine."

The employee said they've spoken to unvaccinated colleagues who are "worried and frightened for their livelihoods" because of the policy.

"It's so stressful," they said.

The employee added that Sun Life's vaccine mandate flies in the face of the company's claims of supporting an inclusive work environment.

"This new policy of 'the jab or your job' is the epitome of exclusion," they said. "It's a form of medical discrimination which should be illegal."

Many provinces have imposed vaccine mandates on healthcare workers and public employees, though no such mandates exist for the broader private sector. Ontario is lifting its public employee vaccine mandate on April 4.

However, governments have said private businesses retain the choice to set their own policies for requiring proof of vaccination from staff or customers.

The federal government also maintains a sweeping vaccine mandate for federal public servants.

The Sun Life employee said they've had positive experiences working for the company, but this policy crosses a line.

"Sun Life's misguided vaccine mandate is cruel," they said. "It is unloving and not how we should treat each other. It divides us and our communities. It's creating a horrible and oppressive energy, ruining the great culture we have at Sun Life."

COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE, RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY NEWS

Vaccinated Travellers No Longer Need Pre-Entry COVID-19 Tests To Enter Canada

By Twinkle Ghosh, Global News, April 1, 2022

https://globalnews.ca/news/8725336/vaccinated-travellers-no-pre-entry-COVID-19-tests-canada/

Vaccinated travellers entering Canada no longer need a pre-entry COVID-19 test.

The change to the rules previously requiring any traveller, regardless of vaccination status, to provide a negative PCR or rapid test upon entry into Canada took effect on April 1.

However, Health Canada will still require anyone arriving from outside the country to wear a mask in public settings for at least two weeks, even if they are fully vaccinated.

The rules for unvaccinated and partially-vaccinated Canadians and other travellers who are exempt from the vaccine requirement remain unchanged. They would still need to provide a negative test, or evidence that enough time has passed after an infection, to enter the country.

There could still be mandatory, random PCR testing at airports for all travellers, irrespective of vaccination status, but selected passengers would not be required to isolate while awaiting results, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) told Global News in an emailed statement.

Whether you're flying or crossing at the land border, you'd also still have to fill out the ArriveCAN App. "This applies to all travellers entering Canada, regardless of the length of their trip," the CBSA statement said.

Travellers would still be asked to upload their contact information, travel details, and vaccination information on ArriveCan — everything barring the negative COVID-19 test if they are fully vaccinated, according to Lisa White, director, Central Alberta District for Canada Border Services Agency.

"If you don't complete it (ArriveCan documentation), you could be subject to the full quarantine period of 14 days," White said.

"That's why we're impressing upon folks the importance of having that completed" before they get to Canada, White said.

"It's very simple. It's very fast," said White. "And it just makes your return to Canada that much more smoother and you're avoiding that potential for quarantine as well."

Ever since Canada announced the change two weeks ago, travel groups say they've seen a surge in travel bookings and inquiries.

"It's a really positive step," said Richard Vanderlubbe, president of Tripcentral.ca

Other than the added cost and hassle of taking a test before boarding a plane, travellers don't have to worry about being stranded in a foreign country and extending their stay if they test positive for COVID-19 while abroad, Vanderlubbe said.

"It's a big blocker for travel demand that's gone now and we've seen a continuing rise in bookings and inquiries since then," Vanderlubbe told Global News.

Martin Firestone, a travel insurance broker in Toronto, said the lifting of the testing requirement combined with easing of public health measures announced in recent weeks is going to have a "huge effect on travel."

He said insurance sales for the month of March were already higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

"The bottom line is to all those travelling after April 1, now it's a relief to not have to get tested to come back into the country," Firestone told Global News.

The Canadian Travel and Tourism Roundtable also issued a statement after the initial announcement, lauding the government's decision.

Back to Table Of Contents

"This positive development will bring Canada into better alignment with other major countries, is a recognition that the Canadian travel and tourism industry has long been among the country's safest, and brings the industry closer to a return to normal," the group said.

As Pre-Entry COVID-19 Tests Disappear, Travel Is Getting Easier. Travel Insurance Is Not

By Erica Alini, The Globe and Mail, March 28, 2022

Ottawa's decision to lift its pre-entry COVID-19 testing requirement on April 1 removes yet another obstacle to Canadians' trips abroad, but navigating the nuances of pandemic-era travel insurance will continue to be anything but easy. Even as flight sales soar, overbookings, the risk of future pandemic waves, and the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine could still scramble the best-laid travel plans.

"People still need travel insurance. As we've seen over the past few years, things can change pretty fast," Tanisha Kishan, a chartered insurance professional at rates comparison site Ratesdotca.

The events in Ukraine add another layer of uncertainty for trips that may be affected by the conflict in Eastern Europe.

One of the top issues travellers should get clarity on when buying insurance is how their coverage would be affected if Canada or their destination country were to once again reimpose a Level 3 advisory against non-essential international travel in response to another wave of COVID-19, Ms. Kishan said.

Ottawa stopped recommending that Canadians avoid international travel for non-essential purposes on February 28. The change means Canadians can now often get coverage for COVID-19 related risks with basic travel insurance and without having to purchase a special policy specifically designed for pandemic times, said Martin Firestone, president of insurance brokerage Travel Secure Inc.

Several base insurance products reviewed by The Globe and Mail currently offer coverage for medical expenses incurred if you become infected with COVID-19 during your trip.

Still, Ms. Kishan advises travellers always to check whether a basic insurance product covers COVID-19 and to what extent.

But regular travel insurance may not cover you for medical costs related to COVID-19 if Canada or your destination country reinstates rules advising against non-essential travel before your scheduled departure date. To be sure you're covered in case of a travel advisory upgrade, you may still need to seek out policies or riders specifically created for pandemic travel, Ms. Kishan warned.

Keep in mind also that trip cancellation and interruption insurance typically doesn't generally cover you if you decide – or are forced to – overhaul your travel plans because of changes in COVID-19 travel advisories or other restrictions, Mr. Firestone noted.

COVID-19 coverage for trip and interruption insurance typically only means you're covered if you have to cancel your plans because you caught the virus or lost your job because of the pandemic prior to departure or had to unexpectedly quarantine during your travel.

One more thing to check: eligibility and coverage limits can vary significantly depending on whether you're fully vaccinated. Canada is not currently requiring booster shots to meet the definition of fully vaccinated, although some foreign countries do.

And yet, COVID-19 isn't the only extraordinary risk facing Canadian travellers. As demand for flights bounces back amid loosening pandemic restrictions, overbooking could also become a significant nuisance, according to Ms. Kishan. Flight Centre Travel Group (Canada) says the number of airplane ticket sales it sold in Canada between March 1 and March 27 was up a whopping 160 per cent compared with the full month of January.

Under Canada's air passenger protection regulations, Canadians may be entitled to compensation of up to $2,400 and no-cost rebooking for being denied boarding because of overbooking. In practice, though, airlines routinely skirt around the rules, according to air passenger rights advocate Gabor Lukacs.

Insurance can help mitigate the risk of being bumped off your flight, Ms. Kishan said, adding that some policies cover costs associated with cancellations and delays caused by airline overbooking.

Finally, if you're heading to Europe, you'll want to make sure your trip isn't affected by the continuing hostilities in Ukraine. Ottawa is currently advising against all travel not just to Ukraine and Russia but also to Belarus, which allowed tens of thousands of Russian troops to gather on its territory prior to Russia's invasion. And the federal government is telling Canadians to exercise "a high degree of caution" if travelling to neighbouring Moldova owing to the impact of the conflict.

While there are no heightened advisories for nearby Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and the Baltic states, Mr. Firestone recommends checking government websites for the latest available updates on any travel restrictions related to the conflict before buying insurance.

In general, with travel rules and risks as fluid as they are right now, it's a good idea to turn to an insurance broker for advice, Ms. Kishan said.

Insurance comparison sites can be "a good starting point" for preliminary research, she said. But, she added, most travellers will likely be better off asking a flesh-and-blood travel expert: "Okay, this is my particular scenario. This is the coverage that I'm looking to have: Can you help me?"

Read Story (Subscription Required): https://www.theglobeandmail.com/investing/personal-finance/household-finances/article-canada-pre-arrival-COVID-19-testing-travel-disruptions/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Coronavirus%20Update&utm_content=2022-3-28_20&utm_term=Coronavirus%20Update:%20Long%20COVID-19%20is%20affecting%20thousands%20of%20Canadians.%20These%20researchers%20are%20racing%20to%20understand%20its%20risk%20factors,%20treatments&utm_campaign=newsletter&cu_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeeFJOJkTb

Travel Insurance Enters New World, As Pandemic Restrictions Ease

By Jason Contant, Canadian Underwriter, March 25, 2022

https://www.canadianunderwriter.ca/insurance/travel-insurance-enters-new-world-as-pandemic-restrictions-ease-1004219329/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newcom&utm_campaign=CanadianUnderwriterDaily&utm_content=20220325165040&hash=6d73923380f292a40dc042b455f0fde3

The federal government's easing of COVID-19 travel restrictions will generally make it easier for travellers to get insurance coverage, since some providers weren't in the position to offer coverage when travel advisories were at a higher level, travel insurers tell Canadian Underwriter.

COVID-19 and international travel is now at Level 2 (practice enhanced health precautions), down from Level 3 (avoid non-essential travel). Moreover, effective April 1, fully vaccinated travellers will no longer need to provide a pre-entry COVID-19 test result to enter Canada by air, land, or water, although they may be selected for mandatory random testing, the Government of Canada recently announced.

Unless exempt, partially or unvaccinated travellers to Canada five years of age or older must continue to provide proof of an accepted type of pre-entry COVID-19 test result.

The easing of restrictions affects travel insurers differently depending on carrier and individual policy.

"While it's important to choose coverage based on individual needs, with the lifting of the Level 3 global travel advisory, emergency medical expenses related to COVID-19 are now eligible under our standard plans as long as on the policy effective date, there is no Level 3 or Level 4 [avoid all travel] travel advisory related to COVID-19 in effect at the destination," says Julia Koene, a spokeswoman for Allianz Global Assistance Canada.

For travel insurer TuGo, the travel advisory level change doesn't affect vaccinated customers who had emergency medical assistance, since TuGo began offering coverage for COVID-19 regardless of travel advisory back in November 2021, says Brad Dance, TuGo's chief customer officer and past-president of the Travel Health Insurance Association.

Dance adds that since the travel advisory has been lowered, TuGo has seen a further uptick in travel insurance purchases for travellers of all ages. "Traveller confidence has continued to increase with the Government of Canada lowering the advisory level, suggesting it's safer to travel now," he says. "We anticipate even more uptake now, with the testing requirements ending April 1."

Both Koene and Dance highlight the ongoing importance of trip cancellation and trip interruption insurance.

Dance says brokers selling or referring travel insurance should know the importance of offering trip cancellation and trip interruption insurance, particularly during uncertain times.

Back to Table Of Contents

Trip cancellation covers the non-refundable costs of a trip if something happens before the departure date, causing the traveller to cancel the trip. Trip interruption covers events that happen after departure, causing the traveller to interrupt the trip, or to return earlier or later than their original return date.

"COVID-19 remains a known event for trip cancellation and trip interruption benefits offered by Allianz Global Assistance," Koene added. "For policies with trip cancellation and trip interruption benefits that were purchased on or after March 11, 2020, any trip cancellation or trip interruption claims related to previous or future Government of Canada travel advisories connected to COVID-19 will continue to not be payable."

Chaos At The Passport Office

By Maggie Macintosh, Winnipeg Free Press, March 28, 2022

https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2022/03/28/chaos-at-the-passport-office.html?li_source=LI&li_medium=thestar_canada

Eager travellers waited hours outside a Service Canada office in downtown Winnipeg this past weekend, only to be told they should reschedule international plans because the agency's local printer had broken — the latest issue affecting passport delays in Manitoba.

On Saturday afternoon, March 26, approximately a dozen people who were anxiously awaiting new passports at a federal government facility near Portage and Main started sharing frustrations about ongoing renewal backlogs at the agency.

"We all bonded because we were all in this desperate situation where we all felt very helpless," said Shakira Whitton, a Winnipeg mother who has spent much of the last week scrambling to get her two teenagers new passports.

"(After being told the printer had broken), it almost felt like, 'We're being punked. This is a joke. This is not actually happening.'"

The simultaneous end of a frigid winter and virtually all COVID-19 restrictions in Manitoba has resulted in a mad dash to passport offices in preparation for takeoff.

With spring break 2022 underway, the Winnipeg Airport Authority was anticipating more than 9,000 travellers on Sunday, March 27, a daily record since around the time the novel coronavirus was declared.

Not unlike most Manitobans, the Whitton family's travel documents have been collecting dust for the last 24 months.

Whitton only realized her kids' passports had expired on March 15 as she started preparing for their imminent trip to Mexico. The teenagers were supposed to take a vacation with their father, who lives outside of Manitoba, in 2020. The trip was cancelled due to COVID-19 and later rescheduled for spring break 2022.

The mother of two said it is a "miracle" that she was able to secure the new documents for an extra $220 via 433 Main St. at the eleventh-hour on Saturday — just over 24 hours before she had to drive her kids to the airport — despite continuous communication and logistical challenges at Service Canada. Roughly one hour after the printer broke, she received a call from the agency to say that the device was up and running again and her kids' passports would be completed shortly.

"Just because we got our passports doesn't make it OK, the way we've been treated and how the system's working," Whitton said, adding that the problem is not the customer service, but rather wait-times and communication that are both unpredictable. She had to visit the downtown office on three separate occasions before a final stop to secure the documents.

The federal agency's website encourages Canadians to wait to call if they do not have travel plans within the next two weeks due to "very high" call volumes. The agency has put measures in place to protect both client and employee health and safety, and those actions have affected how quickly applications can be processed, the website notes.

Typically, clients who submit a regular passport application at a Service Canada office can expect their new edition to be ready after 10 business days, not including mailing time. Express submissions come at a fee to ensure that process takes under nine days. For urgent requests, travellers pay a costly sum in order to get their document by the end of the next business day.

"COVID-19 is causing disruptions to our services that are beyond our control. As a result, we may not always meet our service standards," states the agency's website.

In a statement to the Free Press last week, a spokesperson for Service Canada said the volume of passport applications has been relatively low throughout the pandemic, in part due to reduced travel because of public health restrictions and advisories. However, they said there has been a recent spike in applications across the country.

As far as Whitton is concerned, the agency could have better prepared for the influx by hiring more employees. Some of the people waiting around on Saturday, March 26 because of the backlog had applied for passport renewals weeks, if not months ago, she noted.

"We're in Mexico now, as we flew out this morning and that's how close the passport office was cutting it for us," said one affected traveller, in a text to the Free Press on Sunday, March 27. "I just want to forget about it."

Despite mailing-in an application nearly seven weeks ago and numerous follow-up visits to the downtown passport office last week, she said she was a member of the group of people who waited outside Service Canada on Saturday afternoon, March 26 and was informed that the agency printer was not working so they were out of luck.

Back to Table Of Contents

The woman was driving home empty-handed and trying to call her travel agent to cancel her trip, when she said she received a call from Service Canada to inform her that the Winnipeg office had successfully fixed its printer problem and she should turn around.

Long line-ups outside the Main Street passport office last week prompted a change in protocols so people could wait inside their cars. The office has been assisting people who have not made appointments in advance on a first-come, first-served basis.

Alberta Tourist Towns Struggle With Staff Shortages As Restrictions Ease

Job Resource Centre Says Banff And Canmore Enduring A Staff 'Drought'

By Jade Markus, CBC News, March 25, 2022

https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/banff-alberta-canmore-jobs-1.6398062

Even with COVID-19 restrictions easing in Alberta and abroad, the province's tourist towns are struggling to attract international workers.

The Job Resource Centre, which operates in Banff and Canmore, is putting up postings and "getting zero response," said its director, Michel Dufresne.

Prior to March 2020, on a good day the job centre might see 50 to 100 clients, Dufresne said. But now a good day is about 10 people.

Hotel, retail, restaurant, sightseeing, and ski resorts in towns such as Banff and Canmore rely heavily on foreign workers, he said, and pre-pandemic they made up nearly half their workforce.

He said people in those types of organizations are planning for the summer — when huge volumes of tourists arrive — and they're worried.

"What we used to call a staff shortage that's common here in Banff and Canmore …right now it's not a shortage anymore, it's a drought. It's a staff drought," he said.

"I keep saying it's going to get better, it's going to get better. But I've been saying that for six months now."

Dufresne said the job centre starts getting more responses when students finish university around the end of April.

"People would arrive in May. But what's going on is that we're not getting these inquiries we used to get."

He said it's possible the shortage could be caused, in part, by the slow processing time of applications for international workers.

CBC News recently obtained data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada that shows a backlog of hundreds of thousands of temporary residence applications.

It can take 12 to 18 months for a foreign worker to arrive in the country after they're selected by an employer, said Trevor Long, president of the Banff and Lake Louise Hospitality Association and manager at the Rimrock Resort Hotel.

"We need this process to be expedited," he said.

Long said there are several affordable housing projects underway in Banff, but more are needed because housing is a crucial component of the staffing shortage.

"Certainly, the housing in Banff sometimes is not ideal," he told the Calgary Eyeopener.

He also said that additional incentives — such as subsidized housing, subsidized or free meals in place, ski passes, free access to local public transportation, and incentives for longevity of employment — could lure workers back.

"We desperately have to fill our labour force immediately. We're coming out of the pandemic and calling it a time for economic recovery. But if we don't have the staff, we're going to have a tough time recovering."

‘Re-Opening Doesn’t Mean Recovery’: Waterloo Region Tourism And Hospitality Businesses Still Reeling

Staffing Shortages Exacerbated By The COVID-19 Pandemic Continue To Plague The Sector

By Bill Jackson, Waterloo Chronicle, March 28, 2022

https://www.therecord.com/local-waterloo/news/2022/03/28/re-opening-doesn-t-mean-recovery-waterloo-region-tourism-and-hospitality-businesses-still-reeling.html?li_source=LI&li_medium=therecord_recommended_for_you

Now that COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, jobs are plentiful in Waterloo Region's hospitality sector.

However, job vacancies continue to plague the tourism and hospitality sector, even though the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be on its way out.

“We’re expecting huge demands for the summer because there’s so much pent-up demand to travel,” said Michele Saran, who recently took over as executive director of Waterloo Region’s tourism and marketing corporation.

"Our restaurants and hotels aren't staffed to the level they should be to meet that demand, and we're concerned because we might not be able to meet the expectation of visitors in terms of service."

The good news is that with COVID-19 restrictions being lifted, employment in Ontario in February jumped by 194,000 jobs, or 2.6 per cent. The accommodation and food services sector saw the biggest jump, with more than 113,000 jobs filled.

Yet with summer on the way, there are still hundreds of permanent and temporary positions available in Waterloo Region.

Many former employees in hospitality and tourism still aren't coming back after being scooped up by health care and retail, Saran said.

"The big thing here is that re-opening does not mean recovery," she said.

"The biggest challenge we have right now as a tourism industry is labour shortages. We were the first hit industry, we were the hardest hit, and we're going to be the last to recover."

The human resources team at Bingemans has been focusing on recruitment for the past several months, according to president Mark Bingeman.

All activities and outlets that can be open are open these days.

After a loosening of restrictions in recent weeks and a busy March break, banquet halls are booking their slots, with weddings and some corporate events returning and reservations being taken for Easter and Mother's Day brunches.

Bingeman said plans are in the works to re-open seasonal attractions such as the Big Splash water park at full capacity, as well as activating a new outdoor event space for 3,000 people behind Boston Pizza. A full Oktoberfest program is also expected to return later this year.

"Obviously it's a huge shift," Bingeman said. "We're coming from two years of not being able to give out hours to staff or trying to work with them to keep them occupied, so the whole recruiting machine has been in overdrive for quite some time."

There are dozens of summer positions currently available.

"We're hiring at all of our different locations, increasing our staff, because we're certainly expecting and seeing a good uptick in business," Bingeman said. "There's a major drive to get our locations overstaffed and to be ready for the busy times that we are seeing ahead."

Keith Muller, chair of Conestoga College's School of Hospitality and Culinary Arts, said most of the students in his program are already working part-time, yet he continues to receive calls from local establishments in need of help, especially those requiring line cooks and servers.

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

"Unfortunately for the industry, I just don't have any more I can send them, so it really is a dire situation," he said.

"Everyone is struggling for staff, scrambling to find people, and having to increase wages too, which isn't necessarily a bad thing."

Many restaurants are still choosing not to open on certain days and are reducing menus as a result of both staff shortages and rising food costs, Muller noted.

We haven't reached the pinnacle of price increases yet, he said. "I think there's a lot worse to come."

What that means for hospitality establishments will vary. Larger chains still have the money to persevere, but Muller expects smaller restaurants will suffer as a result.

"I'm still hearing people struggle: 'Yes, we can open up, but I don't know how long we can continue.'"

The Travel Industry Wants To Help Travellers Sleep Better, And Offerings Go Far Beyond A Pillow Menu

By Sarah Treleaven, Special To The Globe and Mail, December 28, 2021

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/travel/article-the-travel-industry-wants-to-help-travellers-sleep-better-and/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Health%20&%20Wellness&utm_content=2022-3-28_16&utm_term=The%20travel%20industry%20wants%20to%20help%20travellers%20sleep%20better,%20and%20offerings%20go%20far%20beyond%20a%20pillow%20menu&utm_campaign=newsletter&cu_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeeFJOJkTb

Newfoundland and Labrador's Fogo Island Inn has a global reputation for fine cuisine, stunning architecture, beautiful handicrafts and a host of local experiences such as ice fishing, caribou watching, and partridgeberry harvesting – all at a premium price. And so, it was perhaps a touch unexpected when the inn recently announced that its new spring program mostly revolves around being unconscious.

The Secrets of Sleep: A Life-Changing Retreat from March 2 to 6, 2022, will be led by Colleen Carney, director of the Sleep and Depression Laboratory at Ryerson University in Toronto. Daily workshops will include discussions on how to "heal your relationship with sleep," and encourage both head-clearing and sleepy-time activities such as spending time in the fresh, salty air, journaling in the property's library, yoga and meditation, relaxing in a rooftop hot tub, or sipping a hot toddy in front of a wood-burning stove. At night, guests can drift off under a nicely weighted handmade quilt to the background noise of waves hitting the rocky shoreline. The program costs $1,100 above the resort's standard room and board.

"We've often heard from guests that they've 'never slept better,' and pride ourselves in knowing our inn is conducive to relaxation and reflection," says Amanda Decker-Penton, managing director of Fogo Island Inn. "We know we have a special environment when it comes to quality sleep, and wellness in general. We also understand that natural solutions to sleep problems are highly sought after."

While "sleep tourism" used to imply bedding down in an exotic location – think ice hotels or safari camps with beds open to the stars – the term has gradually taken on a different connotation: going on vacation for the express purpose of getting some decent sleep.

Conventional hotel rooms have a mixed track record on promoting optimal sleep. Travellers are often presented with a host of intrusions that stand in the way of a good night's sleep: jetlag, unfamiliar surroundings, nagging concerns impossible to leave back home, and the near inevitability that some element of the room's technology – whether it's a remote that supposedly controls the drapes or an old-school clock radio with an alarm preset for 5 a.m. – will make things less zen.

And so, some hotels are now setting out to address those problems head-on. In early 2020, the Ellerman House hotel in Cape Town, South Africa, launched the continent's first "Sleep Rooms," which according to a press release were designed by wellness consultant Harry Jameson "to promote rest and relaxation." All electronics have been removed from the room, and guests are welcomed with a "sleep pack" that contains bath salts, CBD chamomile tea, lavender pillow mist, and "stillness body butter" that contains sleep-enhancing ingredients. Guests are guided through a "signature sleep ritual," purportedly designed to help the body naturally increase melatonin, the hormone associated with the sleep-wake cycle.

These programs could assume greater relevance in an age of pandemic burnout and anxiety, but they aren't entirely new. More than a decade ago, I attended one in Los Cabos, Mexico, when I went through a bout of sleeplessness that I attributed to a combination of work stress, lousy food choices, and drinking too much red wine. Stationed at an oceanside resort, I consulted with a nutritionist, engaged in breathing exercises, indulged in underwater shiatsu massage, and had my butler light aromatherapy candles shortly before bedtime. I still woke most nights at 3 a.m. with my mind racing, but I felt oddly serene during my waking hours.

La Carmina, a travel journalist based in Vancouver, found herself chronically overstimulated on a trip to Tokyo in 2017, owing to the neon lights and "all-night Goth clubs." She checked herself into a Buddhist temple stay in Koyasan, just north of Osaka, so she could finally get some sleep. She stayed in a highly minimalist traditional room, with a natural futon mat and pillow on a tatami floor. Before heading to bed every night, she took a long, hot soak in a deep Japanese-style tub, and then went outside to star gaze and luxuriate in the total silence. "In this tranquil environment, I think I slept 10 to 12 hours straight," she says.

Hotels have been hawking their own premium mattresses for years, but the next wave of sleep travel is much more detailed and immersive. "Sleep programs originally were associated with wellness retreats as part of the holistic approach to achieving a healthier lifestyle," says Misty Belles, vice-president of global public relations for Virtuoso, a luxury-travel consortium. "Early on in the pandemic, we saw the trend of celebrity bedtime stories come about, which was a recognition that no one was sleeping easy. Hotels are responding by creating sleep programs that ensure a better night's sleep during the stay and some go the extra step of providing coaching and techniques that guests can take home with them."

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

London’s Cadogan Hotel has a new partnership with local hypnotherapist and sleep expert Malminder Gill. Its “Sleep Concierge” service will include a meditative recording, a pillow menu, a weighted blanket, scented pillow mist, and a bedtime tea service. The Rosewood Bermuda has a new three-hour “Sleep Well Journey” for those “wanting to combat the stress, anxiety, and insomnia people are experiencing during these uncertain times”; it includes a consultation with a local sleep therapist and acupressure massage. And the Peninsula Chicago recently decided to reinstate its “Sleep Support Therapy” program: a series of massages, nasal oil application, and guided savasana – the final resting pose in yoga that’s also known as corpse pose.

The Global Wellness Institute, a U.S.-based non-profit, refers to sleep as an “over-the-top wellness trend,” and predicts the “sleep economy” will reach US$585-billion by 2024. They also predict a focus on “circadian health,” with a limit on man-made noise and light. Just before the pandemic struck, IHG Hotels & Resorts announced that it was installing circadian lighting – lighting based on the 24-hour internal clock of humans – in rooms to help encourage alertness by day and sleepiness by night. Several hospitality chains are also looking to other higher-tech solutions, such as the artificial intelligence-enabled “Bryte Bed” – adopted at higher-end resort properties such as Carneros Resort and Spa in California’s Napa Valley – which is described as a “science-based, purpose-built sleep experience designed to promote total relaxation.”

It’s hardly news that people often look to vacations as a potential cure for what ails them. But right now, the old tricks of lying on the beach or falling into a half-awake cruise ship coma might not suffice. As pandemic outbreaks and protocols tail us wherever we travel, there is, for the immediate future, no real escape from COVID-19 anywhere in the world – except, perhaps, in our dreams. La Carmina says her friends are booking trips for the express purpose of getting some shut-eye: “Rather than running around to see landmarks, they’re keen to simply chill out.

Canada’s New ‘Ultra-Affordable Airline’ Takes Off In April And It Keeps Adding More Routes

By Helena Hanson, Narcity, March 27, 2022

[Canada's New 'Ultra-Affordable Airline' Takes Off In April & It Keeps Adding More Routes (msn.com)](msn.com)

If you haven't heard of it yet, Lynx Air is a new Canadian airline that burst onto the scene back in November 2021.

The company, which is using an "ultra low-cost carrier model," is promising low fares, brand new aircraft, and great customer service.

While its first flight doesn't take off until April 7, the airline had already expanded its network to reach six Canadian cities in total: Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Kelowna and Victoria.

On March 17, it confirmed "a major expansion out of the Toronto region," with four new destinations and five new routes. The airline's destinations now also include Hamilton, Halifax, St. John's, and Edmonton.

JetBlue Is Launching Its First Flights To Canada & You Can Go These US Destinations

By Morgan Leet, Narcity, March 28, 2022

https://www.msn.com/en-ca/travel/news/jetblue-is-launching-its-first-flights-to-canada-you-can-go-to-these-us-destinations/ar-AAVALFS?ocid=msedgntp

Pack your bags and get out your passport, because new flight routes are coming to Canada this summer.

JetBlue Airways, a low-cost American airline, is going to be flying into Canada for the first time ever — with Vancouver (YVR) as the destination.

If you live in Vancouver, your summer travel plans to the U.S. might be easier than expected. JetBlue is going to be offering non-stop flights to and from New York and Boston from the Vancouver Airport.

According to a press release from YVR, the flight route to New York is going to be year-round. Time to get excited for Christmas in the Big Apple!

The flight route to Boston is going to be seasonal though, so take advantage of it while you can.

"We are truly excited to announce that YVR is JetBlue’s first-ever Canadian destination. Starting in summer 2022, JetBlue will be offering two new non-stop services to Vancouver from JFK and Boston," said the press release.

The JetBlue website said that flights from Vancouver to New York (JFK) are going to start on June 9.

The flight route to Boston from Vancouver is set to start on June 16.

Although prices for the flights aren't announced yet, the airline, in general, has great deals. Flights from Boston to New York start at just US$33 for dates in May.

If the new flight routes to Canada are anything like that, a vacation will definitely be in order.

Although the airline is not in Canada yet, there are similar low-priced airlines to compare it to here. Canadian discount carriers Flair, Swoop, and Lynx Air all offer competitive rates.

cafii acifa
The Canadian Association of Financial Institutions in Insurance | L'association canadienne des institutions financières en assurance
200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☏ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

Air Canada CEO Sounds Optimistic Note, Despite Rocky Outlook For Aviation Industry

By Eric Atkins, The Globe and Mail, March 28, 2022

Air Canada's top executive sounded an optimistic note about the coming months in a speech to shareholders on Monday, March 28, even as the war in Ukraine and soaring fuel prices dampen the industry's outlook. Michael Rousseau, the chief executive officer of Air Canada, said Canada's largest airline plans to operate at 90 per cent of its pre-pandemic capacity this summer, restoring routes cut during the pandemic and flying to 33 international destinations. Mr. Rousseau, speaking at the company's webcast annual meeting of shareholders, pointed to rising revenue, reduced expenses and $10.4-billion in cash and other liquid assets. "It is apparent the recovery is accelerating," he said. Operating revenue rose to $2.7-billion in the fourth quarter of 2021 – a threefold increase over the same period in 2020. The airline's overall expenses for 2021 fell $160-million even as fuel costs rose 20 per cent. Still, Air Canada lost $3.6-billion in 2021 and $4.6-billion in 2020 as the pandemic halted most air travel. By way of comparison, its profit was $1.4-billion in 2019. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has dampened demand for air travel, especially in Europe, and driven jet fuel prices to levels not seen since 2008, said a report from Naveo, a British consultancy. Prices for fuel, which is typically among an airline's top two expenses, have doubled over the past year and are up about 33 per cent in the past month. That means airlines, including Air Canada, that do not have a fuel hedging program are facing a sudden surge in costs, Naveo said in its report. Mr. Rousseau did not provide details on the impact of higher fuel costs but said 79 older planes have been retired and more fuel-efficient aircraft are being added, including last week's announcement of 26 Airbus A321 Neo models. "Cost control is always a top priority, but with rising fuel prices it is taking on even greater importance," he said. Markets are awaiting Air Canada's investor presentation on March 30 for details on the company's longer-term forecast. Walter Spracklin, a stock analyst at Royal Bank of Canada, said he expects the tone of Wednesday, March 30's event to be positive, as the airline slowly emerges from two years of travel restrictions. The key, Mr. Spracklin said in a note to clients, will be how management views the sustainability of demand for leisure travel after the initial pent-up demand is satisfied, as well as the outlook for a recovery in business travel. "This is important given international and business travel were drivers of profitability pre-pandemic," Mr. Spracklin said.

Read Story (Subscription Required): https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-air-canada-michael-rousseau-speech/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Top%20Business%20Headlines&utm_content=2022-3-28_17&utm_term=&utm_campaign=newsletter&cu_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeeFJOJkTb

Air Canada Plans To Double Capacity This Year As Travel Demand Returns

By The Canadian Press, March 30, 2022

https://globalnews.ca/news/8721360/air-canada-capacity-travel-demand/

Air Canada plans to more than double its capacity this year compared with 2021, but says that is still below its pre-pandemic level.

In its outlook for this year, the airline says its capacity, measured by available seat miles, for 2022 will be up about 150 per cent compared with last year.

However, Air Canada says its capacity will still only be about 75 per cent of where it was in 2019 as it continues to account for passenger demand, public health guidelines, and travel restrictions.

The airline says it expects its adjusted cost per available seat mile for 2022 to increase about 13 to 15 per cent when compared with 2019.

Looking further into the future, Air Canada says it expects its capacity for 2024 to be about 95 per cent of its 2019 level.

Air Canada CEO Michael Rousseau says with the pandemic receding and travel returning, the airline has put in place a strategy to return to profitability and increase long-term shareholder value.

Federal Ruling Threatens Flair Airlines' Licence

Federal Agency Says Flair, Which Spurred Big Expansion At The Region Of Waterloo Airport May Not Be Canadian

By Catherine Thompson, Waterloo Region Record, March 29, 2022

https://www.therecord.com/news/waterloo-region/2022/03/29/federal-ruling-threatens-flair-airlines-licence.html

The Canadian Transportation Agency has issued a preliminary ruling that could threaten Flair Airlines' ability to continue flying.

If the decision is confirmed in a final ruling, the airline's licence to operate could be cancelled or suspended.

It's not clear how the ruling, if confirmed, will affect expansion plans at the Region of Waterloo International Airport, which were spurred primarily by the passenger growth generated by Flair.

The federal agency, which oversees the Canadian transportation system, issued a preliminary determination on March 3 "that Flair may not be controlled in fact by Canadians and may, therefore, not be 'Canadian', as defined in the Canada Transportation Act."

To be licensed, a Canadian airline must be mostly owned and controlled by Canadians.

In an email statement, the Edmonton-based discount insists that it meets federal rules.

"Flair Airlines is a Canadian airline and is controlled by Canadians both in law and in fact," says the statement from Stephen Jones, Flair's president and CEO. "Flair Airlines, at all times, operates its business in compliance with the laws and regulations governing air transportation in Canada. Flair Airlines will fully co-operate with the Canadian Transportation Agency review and will respond to the Canadian Transportation Agency in a timely manner."

People who have booked tickets with the airline need not worry, Jones said. "Flair is here for the long term and is committed to finally bringing sustainable, affordable airfares to the people of the Kitchener-Waterloo region," he said. "Customers can absolutely book with confidence, and we look forward to welcoming them aboard this summer."

The Canadian Transportation Agency began a review late last year of the airline. It examined Flair's relationship with a U.S. investor, to ensure this arrangement does not put U.S. investors in actual control of the airline. Miami-based 777 Partners owns 25 per cent of Flair, has three of its five board seats, and leases several planes to Flair, according to a Globe and Mail report.

Canadian transportation rules require a licensed airline to be incorporated in Canada, that Canadians hold a majority of voting shares, and that Canadians control the airline's strategic decisions and manage and run its day-to-day operations.

To determine de facto control, the agency "may need to examine all operational, managerial, and financial relationships" that an airline has with foreign entities, it says on its website.

Flair has 60 days to respond to the preliminary ruling, after which the agency will issue a final determination. "If the Agency determines that an existing licensee no longer meets the requirement (to prove it is Canadian), the Agency must suspend or cancel the licence," the agency says on its website.

Flair has had a huge impact on the Region of Waterloo airport since it began flying there in May 2021, and accounts for 80 per cent of the airport's passenger traffic.

The airport struggled with passenger numbers for years — fewer than 80,000 people went through the airport in 2018 and 2019. Those numbers soared once Flair began flying out of the Breslau airport, with more than 200,000 passengers in 2021 and 782,000 passengers expected in 2022.

Flair has brought 150 jobs to the Region, and operates multiple flights every week.

The Region is spending $44 million over two years to double the size of the airport terminal, mainly to accommodate the extra passengers Flair has brought.

The Region is monitoring the situation, and will respond when the agency issues a final ruling, said Rod Regier, the Region's commissioner of planning and development.

"Regardless of the outcome of this process, Flair has demonstrated the viability of YKF and the interest of travellers in our market area to use YKF as a gateway to other destinations," Regier said.

Flair Airlines Adding New Winter Flights To Arizona Next Year From Five Canadian Airports

By Eloise Therien Global News, March 29, 2022

https://globalnews.ca/news/8718564/flair-airlines-tucson-alberta-routes/

Flair Airlines, an independent low-cost carrier based out of Edmonton, has announced flights from five Canadian airports to Tucson, Arizona starting next winter — including three in Alberta.

According to Flair Airlines chief commercial officer Garth Lund, the Edmonton International Airport and Fort McMurray International Airport will see twice weekly service.

The Lethbridge Airport, the Prince George Airport in northern B.C., and the Windsor International Airport in Ontario will have one flight per week.

The service to the Tucson International Airport will begin in late November and early December, and run into March 2023.

"What's really exciting about this is — aside from Edmonton — most of these cities don't right now have non-stop affordable service to the sun," Lund said during a Tuesday, March 29 news conference.

Currently, the Lethbridge Airport only has one major carrier: WestJet became the sole airline servicing YQL after Air Canada dropped its routes in March 2020.

"This new announcement today really is the impetus for international travel," said Lisa Trent, the director of corporate, customer, and commercial services at the Lethbridge Airport.

The city has been garnering feedback about preferred airline destinations from people who live in and around Lethbridge through the My YQL survey.

"Over 80 per cent of the respondents actually identified (United States) sun destinations, with Arizona being a top identified destination," Trent continued.

"So we're truly listening to the people and we want to continue to invite feedback from the community to inform how we think about future expansion."

Tucson is one of the southern state's largest cities. Lund said while it might not be as well-known as some other more-established southern U.S. travel destinations such as Phoenix and Palm Springs, the airline is looking to help change that.

"The sunshine, the resorts, the golf, the hiking, you know it has so many great things to offer," he said. "As long as we work with Visit Tucson to get that message out to prospective visitors, I think it will be very popular.

Lethbridge Mayor Blaine Hyggen said he sees the partnership taking off.

"The City of Lethbridge has been proactively investing in our airport to position us for an opportunity just like this and we are thrilled to welcome Flair Airlines to our community," Hyggen said in a statement.

According to the city, a one-way direct flight from Lethbridge to Tucson is expected to cost about $125.

When it comes to demand for the routes, Lund said the airline is offering an attractive schedule, adding Flair's lower cost operational business model will allow it to offer lower fares and stimulate interest.

Rick Erickson, an independent aviation analyst based out of Calgary, applauds Flair for this step and believes there's lots of potential going forward.

"Obviously, Flair will watch what demand the Lethbridge market is capable of creating. Who knows? Maybe Phoenix might make some sense at some point, possibly Las Vegas. Palm Springs is also another spot where a lot of Albertans (have) winter homes.

In December 2021, the airline announced 30 new planes would hit the sky in less than two years' time to reach its goal of having a fleet of 50 by 2025.

Is That A Tidal Wave Of COVID-19 Heading Toward Us, Or Just A Ripple?

Opinion By The Globe and Mail Editorial Board, March 25, 2022

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/article-is-that-a-tidal-wave-of-COVID-19-heading-toward-us-or-just-a-ripple/

There is growing evidence that a new wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is headed for our shores. You don't have to squint very hard to see it.

It's there in the World Health Organization's announcement this week that BA.2, the highly contagious Omicron subvariant, is now the planet's dominant strain of Omicron.

BA.2 is believed to be 1.4 times more contagious than the BA.1 Omicron virus that sent much of Canada back into restrictions just before Christmas, and which has killed more than 7,000 Canadians since then.

It's there in the surges in BA.2 cases in China and Hong Kong, and in Britain, France, Italy, Denmark, and Germany.

In Canada, as province after province lifts mask mandates and the federal government eases testing requirements for people travelling into the country, scientists in Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec are seeing a steady increase in the presence of both the BA.1 and BA.2 variants in waste-water testing.

It's also there in the fact that the BA.2 variant is now the dominant strain in Quebec and Alberta, and could soon be dominant in Ontario and elsewhere. It is already believed to represent 50 per cent of all new cases in Canada.

All of these things combine to form an ominous dark line on the horizon, like a massive tidal wave far out on the ocean. If the above-mentioned factors were the only ones taken into consideration, there'd be good reason to fear for the worst.

Thankfully, there are other things at play in Canada, which can and should protect us from being swamped.

One is that the current rise in waste-water signals was largely expected by public health officials. An increase in infections was inevitable after many provinces lifted capacity limits and vaccine passport mandates in late February and early March, and international travel started to return. Those signals will no doubt continue to mount now that mask mandates have largely ended.

The various mandates were effective tools for preventing the spread of infection, but the evidence – the steady drop in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths – was there to argue for lifting them this month.

Still, take them away and infections inevitably increase. Thus, it's still too soon to interpret the rise in waste-water signals as a sign of real danger – and, for now, most provinces continue to report a drop in hospitalizations, or only small increases.

Another positive factor is that Canada has just gone through an aggressive wave of the BA.1 Omicron variant, and there is evidence that people who've been infected with BA.1 are immune to BA.2.

The biggest plus, though, is Canada's high rate of vaccination. Even better yet, the rate is especially high in older, vulnerable populations. Among Canadians 80 years and older, 97.1 per cent have two shots and 84.5 per cent have three. For those ages 70 to 79, 96.2 per cent have two shots and 82.9 per cent have three.

There is solid evidence that vaccines, while not always able to prevent infection, are highly effective at limiting the severity of an Omicron case in people of all ages, and at protecting against a rise in hospitalizations of the kind that could force governments to bring back public health mandates.

But, as this page said last week, there are several million people, including more than 800,000 over the age of 50, who are unvaccinated. And, as of last week, there were more than 1.6 million people over 60 who hadn't gotten a booster shot, which is considered critical against Omicron.

As well, the country's broader booster campaign has stalled out at 47 per cent of the total population.

This week, faced with a rise in BA.2 cases, and unsure of whether it amounts to a new wave of the pandemic, Quebec announced it will provide fourth shots for seniors and other vulnerable groups starting next week.

That sort of precautionary thinking is the right thing to do – for governments and especially for individuals, now that vaccine and mask mandates are lifting.

You can stand defenceless on the shore and wait to find out whether the next wave will tower over your head, or lap up against your feet. Or you can head to the high ground that vaccines provide, continue to wear a mask in indoor public settings (think of them as flotation devices), and wait it out from a safe place.

It's your choice now.

Sixth Wave Was 'Guaranteed' After Mask Mandates Dropped, Experts Say

By Brooklyn Neustaeter, CTV News, March 30, 2022

https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/sixth-wave-was-guaranteed-after-mask-mandates-dropped-experts-say-1.5841211

As officials in Ontario and Quebec report that the provinces have entered a sixth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, some experts say the rise in infections was inevitable as health authorities removed restrictions, such as mask mandates and proof of vaccination requirements, amid the emergence of the Omicron subvariant BA.2.

Dr. Kashif Pirzada, an emergency room physician in Toronto, told CTV News Channel on Wednesday, March 30 that decreased public health vigilance cleared a path for BA.2 to drive up infections and hospitalizations.

"I think it was pretty predictable that when they dropped the mask mandates, it pretty much guaranteed that this would happen," said Pirzada, adding that the sudden rise in hospitalizations in Ontario is "alarming."

Despite hopes that Canada's immunization rates and community level protection through infection could blunt the impacts of the so-called "stealth" subvariant, Pirzada said recent wastewater surveillance suggests otherwise.

Officials in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, and B.C. have recently reported wastewater analysis suggesting that COVID-19 infections are climbing again.

However, Pirzada said it's still not yet clear whether this sixth wave will be a surge or a ripple, but noted that what's currently happening in Ontario and Quebec may be a sign of what's to come for other provinces.

"It looks like hospital capacity might be overwhelmed again. So we are repeating the same mistakes that we did before unfortunately," he said.

With hospitalizations rising, Pirzada said provincial governments may have to re-impose mask mandates to help stem infections amid the upcoming spring holidays.

"Governments will have to be clever, but they'll have to walk back the mask mandate somehow because the big religious holiday season is coming up. Ramadan, Easter, Passover, these are large groups of people that are going to get together indoors, it's going to magnify things," he said.

Canada's top public health officials have said that continuing to wear a mask amid restrictions easing in many provinces is a "personal choice."

PHAC's website states that even if masks are no longer mandatory by local or provincial public health advice, wearing a mask is important and provides "an added layer of protection."

"Whether you're vaccinated or not, you should consider wearing one in shared spaces with people from outside of your immediate household. This is especially important indoors, whether in private or public settings," PHAC says on its website.

Dr. Peter Juni, director of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Table, told CTV News Channel on Tuesday, March 29 that Ontario is "definitely again" in a phase where case numbers are going up "actually quite steeply," and said now is not the time to gather or go to crowded events without a face mask.

Juni said case numbers, based on wastewater surveillance, are back to the levels experienced during the Omicron wave this past winter.

He explained that the difference between these waves is that during the winter's Omicron peak, changes in people's behaviour and the easing of restrictions was "moderate" compared to now when mask mandates and vaccine requirements have ended completely.

With few public heath measures now remaining in place in Ontario, Juni said it's unclear how severe this spring wave of infections could be.

"What is important to realize is that we have had now about 7.2 million people with a third dose, plus probably about 4.5 million people who are infected since December 1. This will offer some immunity, but we're certainly not out of the woods," he said.

Concerns Over Vaccination Rates

Experts say the uptake of third vaccine doses, which has shown to be crucial in protecting against severe outcomes from Omicron infection, is lagging behind first and second doses.

Back to Table Of Contents

A recent study conducted in England found that the efficacy of two Pfizer vaccine doses against symptomatic disease brought about by Omicron was 65.5 per cent after two to four weeks, before falling to 8.8 per cent efficacy 25 or more weeks after vaccination. With a booster dose of the Pfizer vaccine, protection increased to 67.2 per cent after two to four weeks, but again began to wane as more time went on.

Experts say this is concerning for those who are most vulnerable to severe COVID-19 outcomes, such as people who are older or immune-compromised. Those groups were prioritized for early boosters in many parts of the country, thus the immunity provided by those doses is more likely to have waned in the months since. That has spurred talks of a potential fourth dose for some.

According to data tracked by CTVNews.ca, less than 15 per cent of Canada's eligible population – those aged five and older – are not fully vaccinated, with nearly 11 per cent not having received a single dose. In regards to booster shots, roughly 50 per cent of eligible Canadians – those aged 12 and older -- have received a third dose.

Pirzada said the slower uptake of boosters compared to previous doses is "very concerning." He said getting a booster could mean the difference of having a "mild cold or spending a week in bed shivering" if infected with Omicron.

"People who have a booster have a much lighter course of illness… especially if you're within four or five months of your booster," he said.

Dr. Lisa Salamon, an emergency room physician with the Scarborough Health Network in Toronto, told CTV's Your Morning on Wednesday, March 30 that those with just one or two doses are at a higher risk of severe illness if infected by the Omicron variant or its subvariant.

"We're seeing, obviously, cases in the unvaccinated, but the under-vaccinated also make up a significant amount of people that are being hospitalized and could go the ICU," said Salamon.

With few public health measures in place, Salamon said individuals should asses their risks and make informed decisions accordingly amid this sixth wave and she urged those who have not yet done so to get fully vaccinated, as well as any booster shots.

"What we really need to do if we're going to protect those people around and people who are more vulnerable, we really need to wear masks, and those who only have one or two doses of vaccine or even who aren't vaccinated at all, really need to make sure that they're fully vaccinated," she said.

From Despair To Hope: After COVID-19's Toll On Mental Health, More Canadians May Soon Be Able To Access Care

As A New Study Reports 37 Per Cent Say Their Mental Health Declined During The Pandemic, There Are Signs Of Political Will To Move Toward Universal Care.

By Joanna Cheek, Special To The Toronto Star, March 27, 2022

https://www.therecord.com/ts/news/canada/2022/03/27/from-despair-to-hope-after-COVID-19s-toll-on-mental-health-more-canadians-may-soon-be-able-to-access-care.html?li_source=LI&li_medium=therecord_canada

When Juanna Ricketts first became ill a decade ago, she hadn't stopped working since her first job at 14. By then, stressful events started piling up: a miscarriage, the breakup of her marriage, a mistake at her work as a customer service representative at a call centre that cost her job.

"I just reached a breaking point where I couldn't take it anymore," says Ricketts, now a mental health advocate with the Canadian Mental Health Association's (CMHA) national council of persons with lived experience. "I was so sad, it was painful. I couldn't take care of myself … It almost killed me."

Her family doctor in Halifax sent her to hospital, where an ER doctor diagnosed severe depression and told her mother to keep her on suicide watch. It took four months for her to see a psychiatrist, which she says was a dangerous delay; at the same time, it was much sooner than many others.

Unable to function, she moved in with her mother, went through her savings, and ended up on income assistance.

Yet Ricketts was one of the few who could access a psychiatrist, psychologist, attend groups to learn self-management skills, and join the social programs of the CMHA. After four years, "I started to see sunlight again," she says.

Ricketts considers herself one of the lucky ones. Not only because she recovered, but because she could access publicly funded supports that made it possible, unlike so many peers.

Now, the pandemic has pushed Canada's long-standing mental health crisis into a catastrophe, incapacitating an already overtaxed system, says the CMHA in its new report released on March 1.

But Margaret Eaton, the CMHA's chief executive, is optimistic.

"Let's never waste a crisis," she says from her office in Toronto. After years of advocacy for mental health reform, she is seeing Canada shift its mental health care response from Band-Aid fixes to an equitable, unified national strategy. And now, Eaton believes, it's finally the moment when the Association's long-standing goal of universal mental health care can be achieved.

Before the pandemic, mental health conditions were the leading cause of disability in Canada, with one in two people affected by age 40, the CMHA reports. Now, the Association's research collaboration with a University of British Columbia team just released survey findings that show that 37 per cent of Canadians report declining mental health since the onset of the pandemic, with those experiencing the most social inequities facing the greatest mental health decline.

The current system in Canada is like a lottery: if you have money, live in the right location, have the right benefits, or are severe and persistently symptomatic, then you are offered treatment, says Eaton, leaving too many Canadians without.

Before the pandemic, the CMHA reported that 85 per cent of Canadians surveyed felt that mental health was among the most underfunded services in health care, and Statistics Canada lists psychotherapy as the most unmet mental health care need.

The CMHA's recent survey showed that almost one in five Canadians felt they needed help with their mental health during the pandemic but didn't receive it because they didn't know how or where to get it (36 per cent); couldn't afford to pay (36 per cent); couldn't get access (29 per cent); or because insurance didn't cover it (19 per cent).

"Canadians are not getting the help they need when they need it," Eaton says.

Yet Canadian researchers calculated that each $1 invested in psychological services creates a net benefit of $2 in savings to society. That's why we should follow the well-documented success of other countries, such as the United Kingdom, which publicly fund mental health services, including psychotherapy, Eaton says. "I find it really infuriating that we can't follow the research and invest where we know we can have impact."

The CMHA's programs — the very programs that were essential to Rickett's recovery — are primarily funded by charitable donations. "Why is our mental health care system being funded by charitable activities?" she says. "We need to have a wholesale change to our thinking about how mental health gets funded."

Victoria Maxwell, a mental health speaker and performer, who lives with bipolar disorder and anxiety in Sechelt, B.C., says mental health has always been "the poor cousin" to physical health care.

"We never asked a cancer patient to choose between chemo and surgery, but we tell people who have a mental health issue that you can only get medication, that's it, even though the evidence says that therapy and medication are the best treatment," Maxwell says. "My therapy has been as essential as my medication."

Dr. Renata Villela, president of the Ontario Psychiatric Association, agrees.

"They're cutting out one of our effective tools from our tool kit," says the Thornhill psychiatrist. Villela is in the minority of psychiatrists who provide intensive psychotherapy to people with complex mental health needs. As psychiatrists are medical doctors, their services are covered in the public health system, while other psychotherapists, such as psychologists and counsellors, are frequently excluded from public funding.

But even in psychiatry, psychotherapy is becoming devalued, with lower pay compared to providing shorter medication visits, minimal supports in the system, and the Ontario government recently attempting — albeit unsuccessfully -- to limit psychotherapy by psychiatrists, says Villela.

"We need to make sure that this valuable resource doesn't become extinct," she says. "You don't see any other specialty within medicine saying, 'We have this evidence-based treatment and we're just going to stop offering it to our patients.' It's mind-boggling."

Yet, equity of access to mental health services, especially psychosocial supports such as psychotherapy and social programs, may finally be within reach for more Canadians, says Sarah Kennell, the CMHA's national director of public health.

Not only has the federal government appointed a new minister of mental health and committed $4.5 billion to the field over five years, but there's finally cross-party support in Parliament to change the system.

"The recent election campaign," Kennell says, "was the shifting moment where we finally went from throwing money at patchwork, Band-Aid fixes — quick wins of just piling onto a system that's already broken — to all parties speaking about meaningful lasting change at a systems level."

The Liberals proposed the Canada mental health transfer, expanding the delivery of publicly funded services equitably to the provinces and territories. The NDP called for universal free access to mental health care, and the Conservatives made mental health one of their top five priorities, she says.

"The political stars are aligning," Kennell says. "It's an opportunity to right the wrongs that were created as a result of the Canada Health Act, which explicitly excluded mental health services and specifically counselling and psychotherapy from the public universal health care system.

"We actually have the opportunity to equalize the playing field."

Michel Rodrigue, president of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, is also "very optimistic" as he observes MPs now working in non-partisan ways to fix our mental health system.

"We are at a point where we know we will not be able to recover from the pandemic if we don't address the shadow pandemic of mental health and substance-use issues," he says.

"We'd been talking about virtual care for nine or 10 years and then, in the first five or six weeks of the pandemic, we did it," Rodrigue says. "Let's leverage that ability to turn on a dime and really change the landscape."

Rodrigue hopes the non-profit mental health commission will be a "catalyst for change" to drive system transformation in Canada, promoting evidence-based mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment. By researching and identifying what works, it has created a Strategic Plan for 2021 to 2031 to achieve mental and physical health equity by scaling up inclusive, evidence-based mental health strategies for all Canadians. The Commission argues that recovery from mental health conditions isn't just possible, it's expected.

First, we need to promote psychological safety within the places where we spend the most time, such as schools and workplaces, and prevent risk factors, such as poverty, racism, inadequate housing, and trauma, while supporting protective factors, such as social belonging, he says.

We also need to ensure Canadians have access to high-quality, culturally appropriate mental health services when they need them, Rodrigue says.

"And we need to ensure that voices of people who have lived or are living with a mental health problem or illness are core to defining the work, orienting the work so it's relevant with real-life perspectives of how things are progressing on the ground, and really adapting services to their real needs rather than perceived needs," Rodrigue says.

There's consensus on what needs to be done — the CMHA's new report echoes Rodrigue's suggestions. And now the devastating impact of the pandemic has created the collective motivation to do it.

Yet the window for change is narrow, Eaton says.

"There's a moment (in a crisis) that people's minds crack open and we can think differently. And we want to get in there before things slam shut again."

Women's Mental Health Hit Hardest Two Years Into Pandemic

New Study Shows How Pandemic Challenges Have Taken A Toll On Canadians' Mental And Physical Health

By Jean Dondo, March 25, 2022

https://www.wealthprofessional.ca/news/industry-news/womens-mental-health-hit-hardest-two-years-into-pandemic/365214?utm_source=GA&e=YnJlbmRhbi53eWNrc0BjYWZpaS5jb20&utm_medium=20220325&utm_campaign=WPCW-Newsletter-20220325&utm_content=9B8F63D4-69B1-4D0C-AE64-59C8BBAFABC8&tu=9B8F63D4-69B1-4D0C-AE64-59C8BBAFABC8

Weeks of pandemic anxiety, exhaustion, and sadness have stretched into months, and eventually years of anxiety, weariness, and depression. Many Canadians are looking forward to a less stressful time in their life as they hold out hope that COVID-19 case numbers will continue to decline.

The period from March 2020 has taken a significant toll on Canadians' physical and mental health. The trend affects people of all ages, genders, education levels, and other demographic factors, but has been worse for women than men, according to a recent study released by the non-profit Angus Reid Institute in collaboration with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Findings show that half of Canadians (54%) believe their mental health has gotten worse in the last two years, while one-third say it hasn't changed much (33%) and one-in-eight (12%) say they are mentally better now than they were when the pandemic started.

Mental health is a struggle for many people of all ages and genders, but women between the ages of 18 and 54 are the most likely to claim it has become worse in the recent two years. More than six in 10 of women aged 18 to 34 (60%) and 35 to 54 (63%) believe their mental health has gotten “a little” or “a lot” worse since March 2020.

In contrast, just over half of men between the ages of 18 and 54 – including 54% of 18- to 34-year-olds and 55% of 35- to 54-year-olds – said their mental health was “a little” or “a lot” worse. In addition, men over the age of 54 are just as likely to say it hasn't changed (46%) as they are to say it has (46%).

COVID-19 infection has been linked to more serious results in older Canadians, but they are also the most likely to report no emotional consequences. This is something that half of all retirees in Canada agree on.

Three fifths of 18- to 34-year-olds (61%) say their mental health has become worse in the two years since the global pandemic was declared, with 30 percent saying it's gotten a lot worse.

The study also found that women from 18 to 54 years old continue to have a poorer mental health position than other groups. Half of 18- to 34-year-old women (46%) and 35- to 54-year-old women (42%) say they haven't been doing well at all in the last few weeks. In comparison, one-quarter of males over 54 say they are unconcerned.

The survey also touched on the impact of the pandemic on Canadians’ physical health.

With gyms and fitness centres closed due to public health restrictions over the last two years, 53% of Canadians said their physical health has deteriorated since March 2020. That was particularly true among men and women aged 35 to 54 years old (54% and 60%, respectively), and women who were at least 55 years old (55%).

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

'I Quit': 23 Per Cent Of Employees Say They Will Quit 'On The Spot' If Forced To Return To The Office Full-Time

A Recent Angus Reid Poll Found That Most Canadians Prefer To Continue Working From Home, And Plan To Look For Jobs That Allow Them To Do So.

By Maija Kappler, Healthing, March 25, 2022

https://www.healthing.ca/wellness/quit-working-from-home-angus-reid-poll/?_ga=2.27252285.1830424119.1648209140-866684511.1625025472&_gl=1*1rmk0nj*_ga*ODY2Njg0NTExLjE2MjUwMjU0NzI.*_ga_72QH41ZTMR*MTY0ODI1OTY2MS4xMC4wLjE2NDgyNTk2NjEuMA..

Roughly 40 per cent of people in Canada are able to carry out work tasks from their homes, according to Statistics Canada, and most of those people have been working remotely since March 2020, with the onset of the pandemic. Now that COVID-19 vaccines are widely available and restrictions have started to lift in most of the country, many employers are asking workers to return to their offices, even as cases start to rise again.

But many people have come to appreciate the flexibility of working from home and aren't ready to go back to office life. An Angus Reid poll released this week found that more than half of Canadians who currently work from home said they would start looking for a new job if they were asked to return to the office. And 23 per cent would be so opposed to the idea that they would quit on the spot, they said.

These numbers have gotten higher since the summer, the poll points out. Back then, a similar poll found that 39 per cent of people said they would have no problem returning full-time to office work. Now, that number has dropped to 29 per cent.

Many of those who like working from home said that it has made their lives easier without damaging their productivity or relationships with co-workers. Thirty-five per cent of people who work from home say they have work-life balance, compared to only 21 per cent of those who work outside of the home. Remote workers are also more likely to report a better relationship with their partner (32 per cent, compared to 21 per cent of those who don't work from home).

And many remote workers feel they've been just as productive at home, if not more than in the office: four in five poll respondents said their productivity level is either "good" or "great."

WFH Less Likely In The Atlantic Provinces

Interestingly, there's some provincial variation between people who work from home. People under 55 living in Ontario or Quebec were more likely to say someone in their household worked from home, while the same group was less likely to work from home in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the Atlantic provinces.

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
(416) 494-9224 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

There was also a financial aspect: many retail and service jobs, which can't be performed remotely, tend to be lower-paying. Only 25 per cent of people making salaries between $25,000 and $49,000 per year said someone in their household works from home, compared to 69 per cent of people making over $200,000.

Health Impacts Of Remote Work

Working from home, of course, isn't without drawbacks . Many people who used to walk, bike, or commute to work are getting less exercise, and most people don't have a work setup in their home that's as sophisticated as the one in their office, resulting in back and neck pain. One study of nearly 900 workers in Bangkok, Thailand found that the main causes of physical discomfort from remote work were weight gain, and neck, shoulder, and back pain.

"Unless people are intentionally replacing their overall activity level and keeping up their exercise, everyone is moving a little bit less than they were," physical therapist Eric Robertson told NBC News . Dr. David Binder of the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital told Harvard Health that he's seen "increased complaints of neck and lower back pain in the last year, often in the context of sitting for extended periods of time with increased work at home."

There are also health drawbacks to physical isolation. Many people with eating disorders relied on the structure and social contact inherent in office culture as a way to curb their reliance on unhealthy eating patterns. The pandemic also increased the incidence and severity of domestic abuse, and made it harder for victims to get help .

"The nature of abuse is one of power and control… so anytime that people's outside contacts are shut off, it puts them at significant risk," Keri Lewis, executive director of Interval House of Ottawa , told Healthing.

Benefits Of WFH Outweigh Drawbacks For Some

But reports have also found that, for many remote workers, the mental health benefits of working from home outweigh the physical drawbacks. A 2021 article in Psychological Science argued using data from several studies that remote work reduces stress (including stress related to commuting), allows people to get more sleep, provides workers with the benefits of greater autonomy, limits the potential for workplace harassment, doesn't force people to spend time in cubicles without windows, and allows them to spend more time with their families.

"Working from home can remove some barriers that may cause psychological distress," the article says. "With remote work, women may be able to manage morning sickness, for example, without having to take time off or share personal information with an immediate supervisor."

Back to Table Of Contents

Like so many other parts of employment, whether people enjoy working from home has a lot to do with their specific circumstances and the way their job functions. A BMC Public Health study from November 2020 found that regular communication between managers and their team members was vital, and that financial compensation for workers' increased use of internet and energy bills could help ease the burden of working from home. But beyond those two statements, the study failed to reach any definitive conclusion.

"The health/work relationship is complex and requires consideration of broader system factors to optimize the effects of [work-at-home] on workers' health," the report's authors said.

How Much Vacation Time Is Enough To Attract And Retain Staff?

By Jared Lindzon, Special To The Globe and Mail, March 28, 2022

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-how-much-vacation-time-is-enough-to-attract-and-retain-staff/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Top%20Business%20Headlines&utm_content=2022-3-28_17&utm_term=&utm_campaign=newsletter&cu_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeeFJOJkTb

Like many Canadian employers, Toronto-based password management software provider 1Password is looking to recruit skilled workers in the hypercompetitive talent marketplace.

The company, founded in 2006, has already seen its head count increase six-fold over the last three years, from 108 employees in 2019 to 640 today. After closing the largest investment round in Canadian history this past January – bringing the cybersecurity firm's total valuation to US$6.8-billion – the company hopes to hire its 1,000th employee before the end of this year.

To appeal to prospective hires and retain existing staff, 1Password recently introduced a compensation package that includes premium benefits, equity in the company, and a 7.5 per cent cost of living increase to all employees, regardless of position or seniority. It also took a completely new approach to paid time off (PTO).

"We've basically taken everything we do with PTO, including sick days and personal days, and given everyone 25 days [per year] to do with what they please," says Katya Laviolette, chief people officer of 1Password.

The flexible days off can be used at any time and for any reason, and are offered to all staff members in addition to four company-wide wellness days, and two additional days designated for volunteer work.

In the two months before introducing these benefits, 1Password received roughly 950 applications per week. Since they were implemented in January, the company has received an average of 1,600 applications a week.

In the face of a highly competitive hiring environment, and on the heels of a mental health crisis, Canadian employers are exploring new and innovative approaches to giving staff some much-needed time off.

According to a recent study conducted by Robert Half Canada, 49 per cent of employers intend to add new permanent positions in the first half of 2022, and another 45 per cent are hiring for vacated positions. That same study found that 29 per cent are increasing PTO to help attract and retain talent.

"Employers are definitely stuck between a rock and a hard spot," says Andrew Caldwell, a human resources advisory manager for HR consulting firm Peninsula Canada. "You have a staff shortage right now, and it's not because there are no workers out there; it's because employees are expecting more."

While many employers are responding by providing staff with more vacation days, Mr. Caldwell cautions against being overly generous, as increasing time off could exacerbate staffing challenges.

"The last thing you want to do is offer something and have to backtrack it, because you're finding that people are using vacation, and now we don't have anyone available," he says. "It's something they should take the time and energy to look into."

Mr. Caldwell advises employers to explore novel approaches to paid time off that suit their business's needs, their company's culture, and employees' needs while remaining competitive against employers seeking the same talent. He also believes that it's important for employers to consider the outcomes they want to achieve and find creative solutions that won't come at the cost of productivity.

Toronto-based PR agency Media Profile recently introduced a new program that does just that: in 2021, the company faced retention issues that its president Allison King largely attributes to pandemic-related burnout and mental health challenges.

"One of the things we've always prided ourselves on is low turnover," she said, adding that there were 12 departures among her staff of 48 last year.

In an effort to reduce employee turnover and increase its appeal to prospective hires, the company introduced a new company perk called the "work away benefit." The program provides staff members that have been at the company for at least six months with $3,000 to cover travel and accommodations for two to four weeks. Employees are expected to maintain standard operating hours but are only required to work four days a week, and have the option to add up to two weeks of their allotted vacation time to their stay.

Since the program was introduced in November, employees have used the benefit to temporarily relocate to places such as San Francisco, Florida, Costa Rica, and Alberta. To date, 15 per cent of employees have booked or completed their "work away" travel, and another 10 per cent have plans to do so this year.

"Since we launched the program, resignations are down 50 per cent," Ms. King says. "We've done a lot of interesting things over the years, but I don't think I've ever rolled anything out that's gotten the kind of excitement that this did."

The company has also found the new program to be a significant asset to their recruiting efforts, especially after two years of travel restrictions.

 Back to Table Of Contents

"There's going to be a natural tendency for people to want to explore, to move around, to do different things," Ms. King says. "Employers that don't encourage that are the ones who will be left with disgruntled employees, the ones who are leaving, or maybe the ones who just aren't as good."

Hybrid Workplaces: 5 Emerging Trends

By David Gambrill, Canadian Underwriter, March 18, 2022

https://www.canadianunderwriter.ca/insurance/hybrid-workplaces-5-emerging-trends-1004218995/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newcom&utm_campaign=CanadianUnderwriterWeek&utm_content=20220325152908&hash=6d73923380f292a40dc042b455f0fde3

COVID-19 has changed workers' expectations, although it's not clear yet whether company executives see this new emphasis on personal well-being and remote flexibility as "a temporary pendulum swing, or the beginning of our new normal," writes Jared Spataro, corporate vice president of modern work at Microsoft.

In his article for Harvard Business Review, 5 Key Trends Leaders Need to Understand to Get Hybrid Right, Spataro shares the results of a Microsoft global survey of more than 31,000 workers across 31 countries. In addition to the survey, the Work Trend Index relies on analysis of labour trends from LinkedIn, and trillions of productivity signals from Microsoft 365.

The report identifies the following five trends in the newly emerging hybrid office world:

1) Employees Have Shifted Their Work-Life Balance Priorities

"Compared to before the pandemic, 47% of employees are more likely to put family and personal life over work," Spataro writes. "And 53% are more likely to prioritize their health and well-being."

This shift in priority towards work-life balance is a driving force behind 'The Great Reshuffle,' which is far from over, Spataro adds. "Fifty-two percent of Gen Z and Millennials are considering changing employers this year (up 3% year-over-year), and 18% of all respondents quit their job in the past 12 months, with well-being, mental health, work-life balance, and lack of flexible work hours cited as top reasons."

2) Middle Managers Are Caught In The Middle

Although middle managers are closest to the employees' wants and needs, they have very little power in many companies to do anything about it. They are often caught in the middle between the employees' desire for flexibility and the senior management's desire to get everyone back in the office.

"More than half of the managers we surveyed (54%) feel their leadership is out of touch with employees," Spataro writes. "Case in point: Our 2021 study told us 73% of employees want flexible work options to stick around long-term. But this year, 50% of leaders say they either require or plan to require employees to be in the office full-time."

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

And whereas 80% of remote workers believe their productivity has stayed the same or improved, 54% of business leaders say their team has been less productive since moving to remote or hybrid.

3) Making The Office Worth Coming Back For

Many senior leaders are struggling to explain the role of the office in the hybrid workplace, according to the study.

"Many organizations have been clear in encouraging employees to come back in, but what's been less clear is the why," writes Spataro. "If leaders don't get this right, they're going to risk employees giving up on the notion of hybrid completely.

"In fact, 51% of employees who are currently working in a hybrid model say they're considering going fully remote in the year ahead….38% of them say their greatest challenge is knowing when or why to come into the office, and only 28% of them have a team agreement that answers those fundamental questions."

4) Flexible Work: Does It Mean "Always On"?

"Many of us have felt like we've been working more than ever since early 2020, and our data proves it," write Spataro. "Looking at anonymized productivity patterns in Microsoft 365, we've seen a steady uptick in the average workday span (+13%), after-hours and weekend work (+28%, +14%, respectively), time in meetings (+252%), and chats sent (+32%). It's a rising tide that's not sustainable."

Teams need to make arrangements so that one person's "flexibility" does not increase other employees' work hours.

5) Team-Building Is The Greatest Benefit Of Hybrid Work

"While 58% of hybrid employees have been able to maintain thriving relationships with their direct teams over the past year, only half of those who are fully remote can say the same," Spatano writes. Even fewer fully remote employees (42%) have strong relationships with those outside of their immediate team.

Newly onboarded employees also stand out as a group who will need more support, Spatano observes. "They have weaker workplace relationships, and 56% say they're likely to consider changing jobs in the year ahead."

Co-Working Spaces Take Off In Small Canadian Towns As People Relocate From Large Cities

By Salmaan Farooqui, The Globe and Mail, March 29, 2022

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-co-working-spaces-take-off-in-small-canadian-towns/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Top%20Business%20Headlines&utm_content=2022-3-31_7&utm_term=Co-working%20spaces%20take%20off%20in%20small%20Canadian%20towns%20as%20people%20relocate%20from%20large%20cities&utm_campaign=newsletter&cu_id=Ts6FwhWx6n2rSHC0x7MiReEeeFJOJkTb

Co-working businesses say their model of renting shared workspaces is quickly catching on in smaller communities as the advent of remote work has led to more people moving away from urban centres.

Shane Austin, co-founder of Okanagan coLab in Kelowna, B.C., said his business has returned to more normal levels after membership dipped by 30 per cent at the start of the pandemic, and he expects his business will continue to grow.

Co-working businesses such as the Okanagan coLab allow people who would otherwise work from home to rent shared or private desks and office spaces. They generally run on a monthly subscription, and they aim to foster a sense of community by connecting working professionals and offering services such as business mentorship.

In the past, Mr. Austin's clients mostly consisted of people who were from the region or had lived there for a long time. Now, he said half of his growth is coming from people who have moved during the pandemic, or people who live a more nomadic lifestyle and change cities regularly.

"We've had a lot of people relocating from larger centres like Vancouver or Toronto, several members who've come from out east and just wanted a different lifestyle and something more connected to the environment," Mr. Austin said.

Kelowna, a city of 132,000, is one of many smaller Canadian communities where demand for co-working spaces is rising. Ashley Proctor, co-founder of industry association Coworking Canada, said just about every rural co-working space has seen major growth and has gone from barely scraping by before the pandemic to now considering expansion to keep up with demand.

A 2020 study by Coworking Resources and Coworking.com projected that the world-wide co-working industry would grow 21.3 per cent in 2021 after initially slowing during the pandemic because of restrictions that kept people away from communal spaces.

"We were already seeing massive growth in this industry prior to the pandemic, but this sudden work-from-home event has accelerated things by about 10 years," Ms. Proctor said. And according to Coworking Canada, the fastest growth is expected to occur in suburban and rural towns.

"We're seeing growth in Muskoka, in Sudbury, in Thunder Bay. These are markets that may have had co-working before but weren't making a lot of noise."

Ms. Proctor and other co-working operators say the central reason for this growth is because some remote workers are getting sick of working just from their homes, and feel a need to be better connected with the professional community around them.

That's part of the reason why the Mountain CoLab in Revelstoke, B.C. has a waiting list of around 30 people for a facility that only has roughly 50 desks. The community has around 7,500 residents and is hundreds of kilometres from Calgary or Vancouver – the nearest urban centres where some remote workers have their jobs based.

"More people are working from home, and the CoLab becomes like a haven for people to be able to focus on work without thinking about doing laundry, making food, or dealing with the kids," said Chloe Dumont-Samson, executive director of the Mountain CoLab, who first started using the facility years ago.

"As remote workers we feel isolated … we are longing for connection and we are longing for some sort of community, and the co-working space offers a bit of that."

Ms. Dumont-Samson says the long waitlist for their facility means they often talk about expanding, and she said there is definitely room for another co-working space in the small community.

Back in Kelowna, Mr. Austin said one of his focuses as a member of B.C.'s co-working association is to ensure that new and growing businesses have the support to stay viable in the long-term.

"If we can find ways to get plugged in to what's going on with them in order to support that growth, that would be great," Mr. Austin said.

"We don't want to see them sprouting up and then suddenly dying off within a year" because there's not enough business growth, he said.

OTHER CAFII MEMBER-RELEVANT INDUSTRY/BUSINESS NEWS

One Way For The P&C Insurance Industry To Train New Young Leaders

By Alyssa DiSabatino, Canadian Underwriter, March 24, 2022

https://www.canadianunderwriter.ca/brokers/one-way-for-the-pc-industry-to-train-new-young-leaders-1004219277/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newcom&utm_campaign=CanadianUnderwriterDaily&utm_content=20220324160354&hash=6d73923380f292a40dc042b455f0fde3

The P&C insurance industry is struggling to find talent to fill the leadership skills gap, but a new program designed to get prospective executives to hit the ground running may be able to help with that.

The New Leader Integration program, led in collaboration by University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management and leadership advisory firm Odgers Berndtson, aims to equip senior leaders with the necessary skills to step into their new role.

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
(416) 494-9224 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

"We know from the data that about two-thirds of executives who are new to their role tend to not meet the expectations or their objectives in their first year," says Eric Beaudan, global head, leadership practice at Odgers Berndtson. "There are some issues that contribute to making that first year, or that transition into an executive role, particularly difficult. And the program is really aiming at helping to close those gaps."

The program targets executives who have been in their role for less than 12 months, or who are about to take on a new executive role.

"The talent gaps are just becoming more acute, which is part of the reason why we're running this program," Beaudan says. He notes C-suite turnover is growing year-by-year across all industries, as many boomers and Gen X leaders are retiring.

"When you look at the C-suite turnover, [it] used to be 6% to 8% about five years ago, in 2016, 2017. In the past three years, it's jumped to 20%. Now, last year, it was 24%," he says. "By 2025, about 75% of the workforce will be Millennials and Gen Z. So, we're in the middle of this very significant transition from two generations of leaders to another brand new generation of leaders."

Because of retirement trends, Beaudan notes that many new executives are stepping into their leadership roles years earlier than their predecessors. "The program is really trying to help those individuals who are stepping into an executive or senior leadership role maybe 10 years before they are fully ready to take on that role, and it's helping to accelerate their development."

New executives will learn skills that will benefit themselves as new leaders, as well as their organization more broadly, Beaudan says.

"As you take on an executive role, the stakes are much higher. You need to really refine your ability to engage with people, whether it's the board or other executives, in a much more engaging, convincing way."

Another major skill executives will learn, Beaudan says, is how to determine the culture of the organization and build an effective team. "How do you shape the team you've got, so it's aligned to your purpose and your vision for what you're trying to accomplish?" he asks.

He finds his financial services and insurance clients are susceptible to losing talent. "People are being recruited very aggressively by competitors, by American-based companies, that are doubling salaries."

It's more important than ever to retain your talent by empowering employees. "The pendulum has really switched…from the employer having all the cards to now the employee really having all the cards," Beaudan says.

Originally meant to launch between March 22 and April 7 for six half-day sessions, the program will be delayed until the fall to accommodate enrollees' schedules.

Back to Table Of Contents

"A lot of people told us that they were very interested, but they want a bit more time. So, I think we'll probably run the program sometime in early fall, just to give people who want to be in the program a bit more time to adjust to their role," Beaudan says.

Emerging Trends In Broker Compensation

By David Gambrill, Canadian Underwriter, March 25, 2022

https://www.canadianunderwriter.ca/insurance/emerging-trends-in-broker-compensation-1004219338/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newcom&utm_campaign=CanadianUnderwriterDaily&utm_content=20220325165040&hash=6d73923380f292a40dc042b455f0fde3

In the midst of the 'Great Reshuffle,' brokerage principals are finding employee recognition programs to be a better way to compensate brokers for good performance.

Fifty-three per cent of the 119 brokerage managers participating in Canadian Underwriter's 2022 National Broker Survey touted employee recognition programs as the best way to motive broker performance.

"Recognition is such a powerful tool to motivate and engage staff," one young male executive from a Canadian mid-sized brokerage commented anonymously in the survey. "Money is often temporary."

Last year, at the height of COVID-19 restrictions, only 42% of brokerage principals surveyed in Canadian Underwriter's 2021 National Broker Survey reported that employee recognition programs had been beneficial for improving the performance of their brokers.

This year, however, public health restrictions are easing, and employees are returning to work in the office. Or at least, some are. Many labour studies suggest workers are re-evaluating their priorities and leaving current employers to seek better mental health and work-life balance elsewhere.

Eighty-one per cent of Canadian executives are having difficulty finding people with the right skill set to fill positions, according to a national survey of 500 Canadian executives from 11 industries recently conducted by Environics for CERIC — a Canadian charitable organization that advances education and research in career counselling and career development.

Performance-based compensation remains the best way to reward the loyalty of brokers who choose to stay where they are, the survey suggests.

While touting workplace flexibility as a plus, one woman with between 16 and 30 years in the business applauded the move her mid-sized brokerage has made. "Moving to a performance-based employer" has improved broker performance over the past two years, she says, rather than basing compensation on "intangibles."

Overall, survey numbers suggest that the brokerage managers' use of performance-based compensation as a tool for rewarding hard work is gradually dwindling — down from 72% in 2020 to 68% in 2022.

This depends a great deal on the size of the brokerage, with 100 % of the largest brokerages (those with more than 100 employees) extolling performance-based compensation, whereas at small brokerages (under 20 employees), this form of compensation was endorsed by only 57% of those surveyed.

Smaller brokerages (fewer than 20 employees) were much more likely than their larger counterparts to employ profit-sharing plans to encourage broker sales performance.

One broker in the survey noted that commissions need to change to reflect the fact that brokers must do a lot of work to prepare for client meetings while prospecting. But they aren't rewarded for the work if the client declines the offer.

"I believe that for brokers (not necessarily brokerages), compensation is something that needs to change," a manager at a large brokerage commented. "If I go to a dentist, a lawyer, a physiotherapist's office, or any of many other professionals, I have to pay for that first appointment and a broker can spend hours a year on first and even subsequent visits or interviews and gain zero in compensation."

And client service representatives (CSRs) have taken on a whole new lot of work in the new digital world, and compensation needs to change to reflect that, said one broker.

"If the market has moved to order takers from digital online hits, then CSRs are far more important than in the past," a female working in a mid-sized brokerage commented. "They no long refer back to producers they have to handle it ALL. We need to redefine and give them the wages and support for the new emerging role."

One broker is doing this through a commission on new business.

"We have a commission payment on new business for CSRs," one senior female manager at a small brokerage commented. "We have great results and it's a way to add to their compensation package."

David Marshall: How To Fix Private Sector Auto Insurance

By Jason Contant, Canadian Underwriter, March 24, 2022

https://www.canadianunderwriter.ca/insurance/david-marshall-how-to-fix-private-sector-auto-insurance-1004219293/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newcom&utm_campaign=CanadianUnderwriterDaily&utm_content=20220325165040&hash=6d73923380f292a40dc042b455f0fde3

Faulty design features of private sector auto insurance and excessive government regulation are the main reasons to blame for challenges facing the private-sector auto insurance markets, says David Marshall, who has served as a senior advisor to the Government of Ontario on auto insurance and pension funds.

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
(416) 494-9224 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

"Among the provinces, those that provide auto insurance directly through a government agency appear to provide better value for money, particularly for personal injury coverage, than those with private-sector delivery," Marshall says in a press release issued on Thursday, March 24. "However, the higher costs for personal injury coverage in the private-sector provinces are not caused by private-sector insurers being inefficient or making excess profits.

"The main reasons for the challenges in private-sector delivery provinces is the faulty design of the insurance product, which governments have imposed on the private sector, as well as excessive government regulation."

Marshall, who was previously the president and CEO of Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, is the author of a new report from the C.D. Howe Institute. He is also well-known for his 2017 auto insurance report Fair Benefits Fairly Delivered which included 35 recommendations.

In the newly issued report Time for a Tune-up: Reforms to Private-Sector Auto Insurance could Lower Costs and Add Value for Consumers, Marshall proposes reforms to private-sector auto insurance that he says could yield millions of dollars in savings for Canadian consumers and make auto insurance more responsive to market forces.

One such recommendation is to reduce regulatory burden to allow the private sector to compete on innovation, price, and value.

According to Marshall, five faulty design features of the private auto insurance market include:

- A complex product design with open-ended commitments to restoring the injured person to pre-accident condition
- A "misaligned" healthcare delivery system that exposes private-sector auto insurers to pay for over-treatments, unnecessary treatments, and potential fraud
- Lump-sum cash settlements to claimants in lieu of paying for specific medical care
- Excessive regulatory burden
- Inadequate provision for seriously or catastrophically injured victims.

To address these challenges, Marshall proposes a series of measures to reduce fraud and waste in the system, and increase consumer choice while maintaining sound medical coverage for personal injury. Among the measures are the following:

- Removing the open-ended commitments in the insurance product and replace them with clear entitlement and benefit criteria
- Abolishing lump-sum cash settlements
- Restricting lawsuits to only the most serious cases
- Increasing consumer choice in selecting benefits
- Reviewing the "restrictive practices" of manufacturers that drive up repair costs, and a recommendation to use only certified repair shops to reduce fraud and effect safe and efficient repair
- Substantially increasing the no-fault entitlement for catastrophically impaired accident victims

- Reducing regulatory burden to allow the private sector to compete on innovation, price, and value

The report notes that Canada doesn't truly have a private sector insurance product, since the offerings delivered by insurers in private sector provinces are government-designed and controlled.

"Provincial governments decide on the features of the product, control how it is delivered, and control its pricing," the report says. "The product is highly inefficient and has many poor design features, which cause it to be wasteful and unnecessarily expensive.

"We find that personal injury coverage is, on average, four times more expensive in provinces where the private sector delivers the insurance than in the provinces with government delivery systems, even though the government systems offer greater benefit entitlements for personal injuries."

The Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) said in a statement that the report echoes many of the concerns which private P&C insurers have been raising for decades. "IBC is looking to work with governments open to reforming private auto insurance regimes and ultimately saving drivers money," the statement says. "IBC and its members believe Canadians deserve affordable auto insurance with more choice and more care for those who need it."

In the report, Marshall outlines some explanations for the government-run systems' lower cost base — including the fact that they are single-payer empowered agencies that pursue active management of healthcare costs and do not have to cope with tort claims. On the flip side, public auto insurance is not responsive to market forces, faces the risk of political interference, and premiums can understate true costs from time to time.

"In many provinces, auto insurance has been subject to years of ongoing political disputes and tinkering, but little has actually been done to improve outcomes for consumers," IBC adds.

Ultimately, Marshall does not recommend that provinces with private-sector auto regimes switch to government auto insurance delivery systems. "Notably, there is a risk that at some point, governments will interfere through their agencies to pursue political goals that distort the price/value of the insurance product," he says. "The future lies in being responsive to rapid changes in consumer needs, especially when it comes to features such as pricing and innovation.

"Provincial governments should not perpetuate the expensive and wasteful auto insurance regimes they have designed in the private-sector delivery provinces. Sensible solutions exist that will save consumers substantial sums each year, reduce disputes, and provide much better value."

IBC adds that record inflation is placing further pressure on auto insurance premiums. Without action, premiums will continue to rise and consumers will pay the price.

"Money can be put back in the pockets of consumers by taking a bold approach to reforming existing private-sector auto products," IBC says. "Anyone calling for the status quo is putting their interests ahead of consumers."

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

Edmonton Oilers File $174 Million Pandemic Loss Lawsuit Against Insurers

By Lyle Adriano, Insurance Business Canada, March 28, 2022

https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/ca/news/breaking-news/edmonton-oilers-file-174-million-pandemic-loss-lawsuit-against-insurers-400247.aspx?utm_source=GA&e=YnJlbmRhbi53eWNrc0BjYWZpaS5jb20&utm_medium=20220328&utm_campaign=IBCW-MorningBriefing-20220328&utm_content=9B8F63D4-69B1-4D0C-AE64-59C8BBAFABC8&tu=9B8F63D4-69B1-4D0C-AE64-59C8BBAFABC8

Yet another NHL team is suing its insurers, as the Edmonton Oilers and its associated companies seek payment for "massive business losses" they suffered during the pandemic.

In a statement of claim filed with the Court of Queen's Bench, the Edmonton Oilers named AIG Insurance Company of Canada, Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Company of Canada (RSA), Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, and The Sovereign General Insurance Company as defendants.

The team claims in its lawsuit that the COVID-19 virus physically altered the interior air, surfaces, and interior of its home, the Rogers Place arena, "making them unfit for their intended use." However, the team noted in its lawsuit that its insurers determined that "viruses do not cause physical loss or damage," in spite of the team securing all-risks insurance.

"The plaintiffs have suffered massive business losses covered under the all-risks policy. The defendants have refused to honour the terms of the all-risks policy and have denied coverage … on the basis that the business interruption did not result from direct physical loss or damage to property," the complaint said.

In total, the Oilers – joined by its affiliates and operators Edmonton Arena Corporation, Oilers Entertainment Group Canada, Edmonton Major Junior Hockey Corporation, and OEG Gaming – said that they suffered $174,137,131 in business losses between 2020 and 2021, CBC News reported.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NHL suspended its season on March 12, 2020, which put an indefinite stop on all games. The mandatory government orders also enforced at around the same period meant that people were unable to use the arena, the Oilers contended.

The Oilers also maintained in its complaint that had it allowed fans back into the facilities in 2020 and 2021 at the height of the pandemic, "it is a certainty that COVID-19 and the COVID-19 virus would have been re-introduced in large quantities into those insured locations and additional and substantial physical loss and damage would have continued."

"The presence of COVID-19 and the COVID-19 virus in the plaintiffs' facilities made the normal use of those facilities impossible for almost two years," the lawsuit said, adding that its status as a high-density location and proximity to an LRT station could result in "numerous infectious individuals" bringing the virus inside the arena.

The Oilers' lawsuit comes not long after the Calgary Flames also filed its own pandemic business loss lawsuit against its insurers. The Flames is seeking $125 million from its insurers – two of which are Liberty Mutual Insurance and RSA Canada, who have also insured the Oilers.

Zurich Insurance Group Drops Logo Amid Russia-Ukraine Conflict

By Terry Gangcuangco, Insurance Business Canada, March 27, 2022

https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/ca/news/breaking-news/zurich-insurance-group-drops-logo-amid-russiaukraine-conflict-400226.aspx?utm_source=GA&e=YnJlbmRhbi53eWNrc0BjYWZpaS5jb20&utm_medium=20220328&utm_campaign=IBCW-MorningBriefing-20220328&utm_content=9B8F63D4-69B1-4D0C-AE64-59C8BBAFABC8&tu=9B8F63D4-69B1-4D0C-AE64-59C8BBAFABC8

The letter Z, which Zurich Insurance Group uses as its logo, has recently come to mean support for Russian president Vladimir Putin and his invasion of Ukraine – prompting the insurer to reshape its branding in the interim to avoid misrepresentations.

"We are temporarily removing the use of the letter 'Z' from social channels where it appears in isolation and could be misinterpreted," Zurich told The Telegraph, which highlighted the increased prominence of the letter as a symbol of pro-Putin support.

"We're monitoring the situation closely and will take further actions if and when required. The Zurich brand has been around for 150 years. It is a trusted brand, and we have proven our ability to change and respond to challenges over time."

It was reported that the letter has appeared not only on Russian army vehicles but even on supporter shirts. Reuters cited it as being featured at pro-Kremlin rallies.

A month ago, the Swiss company stated: "Zurich Insurance Group condemns the Russian government's aggression towards Ukraine, the human suffering that it is inflicting, and the broader threat that it poses to democracy and freedom in the region."

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

AXA Moves Aside From Russia In Actions Update

By Terry Gangcuangco, Insurance Business Canada, March 27, 2022

https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/ca/news/breaking-news/axa-moves-aside-from-russia-in-actions-update-400217.aspx?utm_source=GA&e=YnJlbmRhbi53eWNrc0BjYWZpaS5jb20&utm_medium=20220328&utm_campaign=IBCW-MorningBriefing-20220328&utm_content=9B8F63D4-69B1-4D0C-AE64-59C8BBAFABC8&tu=9B8F63D4-69B1-4D0C-AE64-59C8BBAFABC8

Paris-headquartered insurance group AXA, which “has condemned the invasion of Ukraine and its devastating human consequences since the beginning of the war,” is taking a number of steps in response to the attack.

In an actions update, the insurer stated: “Since the start of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, AXA has fully enforced all international sanctions. We have also stopped underwriting new insurance business (and stopped all renewals) with respect to Russian-owned assets located in Russia. We have stopped underwriting new reinsurance (and stopped all reinsurance renewals) of Russian insurers.

“We have stopped all new investments in Russian assets. With respect to AXA’s minority financial investment in Reso Garantia, a Russian insurance company, AXA has no operational or management control over this company and has decided to remove its directors from the board.”

Additionally, AXA is backing pro-Ukraine efforts.

“As an organization with a tradition of human solidarity,” it noted, “AXA has also taken several initiatives to support the humanitarian crisis triggered by the war: we have announced a donation of €6 million to NGOs working in Ukraine and the neighbouring countries to support civil populations and refugees.

“AXA Hearts in Action, AXA’s global philanthropic employee volunteering initiative, has initiated multiple local projects which will be supported by a Group donation. AXA is actively exploring how it can further help Ukrainian refugees.”

Blue Cross Life Appoints New President & Chief Executive Officer

By Insurance Journal Staff, March 21, 2022

Blue Cross Life Insurance Company of Canada (BCL) announced on March 18 that Tim Mawhinney has been selected as its incoming President & Chief Executive Officer. He succeeds Marie-Josée Martin who previously announced her plans to retire in April 2022. Mawhinney joined BCL in 2008 and has held roles of increasing responsibility in Capital and Risk Management, including Chief Risk Officer, and, over the past six years, as the Chief Financial Officer. “The BCL Board is excited to work with Tim in his new role as CEO. His overall financial and business acumen have contributed to BCL’s longstanding financial position, including responding to the recent financial challenges of the COVID-19 19 pandemic,” stated Louis Martel, Blue Cross Life Board Chair.

"At the same time, he has been instrumental in the company's recent historical milestones, including the joining of all Blue Cross Plans in Canada as BCL shareholders and the launch of the first national Blue Cross individual life product offering." Mawhinney holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics (Honours) from the University of New Brunswick; a Master's in Business Administration with Distinction from Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland; and is a Fellow of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries. "I am honoured to lead this incredible team as we enter our next phase of growth," said Mawhinney. "I look forward to advancing our efforts to diversify our product offering, accelerate our innovation efforts, and deliver value to our key stakeholder groups."

Read Story (Subscription Required): https://insurance-portal.ca/life/blue-cross-life-appoints-new-president-chief-executive-officer/?utm_source=sendinblue&utm_campaign=daily_complete_202203-28&utm_medium=email

---

Equitable Life Appoints Two New Vice Presidents

By Sabrina Fekih, Insurance Portal, March 24, 2022

https://portail-assurance.ca/personnes/assurance-vie-equitable-nomme-deux-nouveaux-vice-presidents/?utm_source=sendinblue&utm_campaign=weekly_flash_202203-28&utm_medium=email

Equitable Life announced, on Tuesday, March 22, the appointment of new Senior Vice Presidents for Group Benefits and Corporate Strategy and Marketing.

After more than 20 years of experience in management positions elsewhere in the industry, Marc Avaria joins Equitable Life Insurance where he will be responsible for leading all aspects of the group insurance sector while ensuring its development. He replaces Dave Bennett , who has announced that he is leaving the company after having held management positions there since 2009.

Marc Avaria has held executive positions with several insurers, including Medavie Blue Cross, Manulife, and Canada Life. "Marc's experience and in-depth knowledge will consolidate a management team that is committed to building strong, lasting, and harmonized partnerships through mutual status," said Fabien Jeudy , President and CEO at Equitable Life.

Amit M. Punchhi is also joining Equitable Life, on April 4, as Senior Vice President, Corporate Strategy and Marketing. For this newly created role, Punchhi brings 30 years of global industry experience, including with HDFC, Reinsurance Group of America, Sun Life, Fidelity Investments, and Manulife.

"The next generation of our management team has the vision and commitment to further develop our status as a mutual," Fabien Jeudy said in a press release.

RESEARCH/THOUGHT LEADERSHIP/TECHNOLOGY/DIGITIZATION NEWS

Allstate Canada Survey Reveals What Canadians Are Looking For In A Job

Allstate Canada Commissioned A Léger Survey To Get A Better Understanding Of What Job Seekers Were Truly Looking For When They Considered An Employer.

By Ursula Leonowicz, Postmedia Content Works, March 8, 2022

https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/news-sponsored/allstate-canada-survey-reveals-what-canadians-are-looking-for-in-a-job

Towards the end of 2021, the talent acquisition team at Allstate Insurance Company of Canada ("Allstate Canada") began to see signs that applicants were re-evaluating their lives as well as their work. So, the company commissioned a Léger survey to get a better understanding of what employees and job seekers were truly looking for when they considered an employer, and what was most important to them.

Not surprisingly, many of the results reflect society's changing attitudes towards remote work, physical and mental wellness, flexibility, and work-life balance, all of which became increasingly important during the pandemic.

"We're seeing perspectives about work change quite quickly," says the president and CEO of Allstate Canada, Ryan Michel. "COVID-19 may be at the core of this shift, but people's feelings about work are evolving and this evolution will have an impact on the job market."

According to the Léger survey results, 55 per cent of working Canadians thought about looking for a new job between May and November of 2021, a number that rose to 68 per cent for respondents who were between the ages of 18 and 34; 27 per cent of working respondents said they thought about it a couple of times per week, while 11 per cent thought about it every single day.

Another major finding of the survey is that after salary, 49 per cent of working respondents ranked work-life balance as being most important to them, while 37 per cent deemed flexible work hours most important and 22 per cent ranked working from home as what they prized most.

"At Allstate Canada, it is vital that we use data to help inform decisions because it helps our business stay current and relevant and it plays a role in planning for the future," explains Michel.

"What the poll results suggest is that attracting and retaining qualified and talented employees is one of the biggest challenges organizations face today. It also helped reinforce Allstate's approach to supporting our employees through programs that provide flexible work hours, work from home arrangements, funds to set up a home office, and an annual wellness allowance … just to name a few."

Keeping company culture at the forefront has always been of utmost importance to Allstate Canada, which, even before the pandemic, prioritized flexible work hours, meeting-free days, summer hours, working from home, among many other benefits.

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

The insurance company hires candidates from all levels and backgrounds. Recently, it also introduced an annual wellness allowance that provides full-time employees with additional funds to use at their own discretion, whether that's to purchase home office equipment, a gym membership, music lessons, or anything else that might support their well-being.

"A healthy corporate culture is a priority for Allstate Canada and one of the most common reasons employees say they enjoy working here. We nurture that culture with regular, two-way communication touch-points at the enterprise and department levels, and a commitment by the leadership team to be accessible and action-oriented on employee feedback," Michel says.

"Our organizational structure is also a factor that contributes to our work culture. We are a relatively flat company in terms of hierarchy, which helps in two important respects. It encourages teamwork, not only within departments but also across the company, and provides real developmental opportunities for employees looking to build on their skillset and experience."

An established company that has been serving Canadians since 1953, Allstate Canada is not only well-known in the financial world but is also experiencing strong growth. During the last 10 years, its workforce has grown by 62 per cent to over 3,000 employees, while the number of homes and vehicles it insures has doubled to over 1.4 million.

In addition, the company has a clear community investment strategy to foster an environment of inclusion, involvement, and empowerment for those who experience barriers to participation. As part of its corporate social responsibility mission, Allstate Canada also provides employees with the time and resources to volunteer and donate to the causes that are most important to them.

Allstate Canada is currently on the lookout for a variety of roles within the organization designed to capitalize on candidates' strengths and provide them with a development path, no matter what stage they're at in their career. The company is confident it can teach people what they need to know to be successful, "but what we're really looking for are people with a drive to lead, inspire, and innovate from any seat, in any role, and to help others reach their full potential," says Michel.

Back to Table Of Contents

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

Can Insurers Use AI To Retain Staff?

By Tom Warden, Chief Insurance And Science Officer, CLARA Analytics, March 24, 2022

https://www.dig-in.com/opinion/can-insurers-use-ai-to-retain-staff?position=editorial_4&campaignname=DIG%20Morning%20Briefing-03282022&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=V2_DIG_Daily_Briefing_20210316%2B%E2%80%98-%E2%80%99%2B03%2F28%2F2022&bt_ee=JnbnX644HeN%2BLYxaSMZS1UN%2BAqMrHunU7FrYPBh%2FWf0f%2F0Ud0K7poO3wUtr1HDwY&bt_ts=1648472565084

One of the more persistent consequences of the COVID-19 crisis has been the so-called "Great Resignation," a development that has been unfolding over most of the past two years. We've seen a steady flow of employees leave the workforce, many doing so after taking stock of their lives amid a rapidly changing world. The insurance industry has by no means been immune to this. Companies in our industry rely heavily on the institutional knowledge of experienced employees, so as the pandemic has served as a catalyst for early retirements, these organizations have been especially hard hit.

Employees are an organization's most valuable assets. It sounds cliché, but it's undoubtedly true, especially in an industry where knowledge is a key factor in determining success or failure. People are the soul of any organization; they bring reason and purpose to the daily activities of the business. But employees are also a company's single most important repository of critical institutional knowledge. Every successful business is built upon repeatable systems and processes, but it's their workforce of committed employees who operate those systems, who monitor and adjust their performance, and who ensure that they are delivering the intended results.

Veteran employees, especially, hold the lion's share of valuable institutional knowledge, having spent years working with the company's systems and processes as they evolved. These are the people who are best equipped to understand the nuances of the organization's data. When procedures change — for example, when a company has changed the way a particular field within its customer database is used — veteran employees are the ones who can point out the subtle but meaningful distinction years later, helping others in the organization to interpret historical data in the context of today's datasets. When employees walk out the door for good, that kind of institutional knowledge goes with them.

Unfortunately for insurers, these veterans eventually reach retirement age or move on to other things. It's not all happening at once, but for companies that understand where this is all leading, it pays to get ahead of the problem with some mitigating strategies. In this respect, the Great Resignation just might be the wake-up call that many insurers needed.

How might employers in the insurance industry respond? They can hire more people, but that inevitably calls for an intensive focus on training and upskilling those new employees. It does little to compensate for the institutional knowledge that may be slowly slipping away. To some degree, of course, hiring and training new people is unavoidable. Nevertheless, these efforts divert resources that could be better applied toward innovation and growth.

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
(416) 494-9224 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

In fact, there are better ways to approach this problem than by brute force. Perhaps counterintuitively, technology offers a solution that can tip the scales back in favor of a healthy workforce, driving growth and innovation as well as preserving institutional knowledge. With the right technology, insurers can make for a gentler learning curve, capturing the key factors that drive success and offering new employees a much faster path to productivity.

Technology has a well-deserved reputation for disruption, but disruption doesn't always unfold in the ways that people expect it to. Popular wisdom, for example, dictates that artificial intelligence (AI) will replace vast portions of our workforce, resulting in a net loss of jobs as technology supplants human beings. In fact, we're on a trajectory to do quite the opposite, as AI serves to supercharge human capabilities at virtually every step along the value chain.

The enormous gap between AI myth and AI reality has been fueled by Hollywood portrayals that depict autonomous machines that appear to exercise free will. In fact, AI is firmly grounded in human thinking and human processes. Machine learning algorithms are not created in a vacuum; they're developed through careful and deliberate processes designed to support and augment the human side of the business. By sheer necessity, we must understand what people need, how they work, and how the technology can support them in making more effective decisions. Systems that operate without human oversight are destined to fail; effective AI systems are built to serve that operational model.

AI supercharges human productivity by taking on the rote work that most people simply prefer not to do. It elevates the human role in the process by monitoring, digesting, and analyzing vast amounts of information.

In the wake of the Great Resignation, insurers have an opportunity to steer their ships in one of two very different directions. Those who take the default path, simply replacing outgoing employees with new workers, will find themselves increasingly outpaced by the innovators. Those who embrace technology — and who understand how it dovetails with the human element — will find the room they need to adapt and grow through constant innovation.

UPCOMING WEBINARS AND EVENTS

Web Seminar: COVID-19: Can Technology Finally Emerge?

Dates: Wednesday, April 6, 2022
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. EDT

Join us for session three of the upcoming three-part *COVID-19 & Travel – Virtual Series Season 2*, presented by Optimum Life Reinsurance.

This session will focus on the emergence of technology as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic and travel.

Back to Table Of Contents

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

Register Here

Web Seminar: Torys – Leveraging The Data Life Cycle: Data Strategies For Business Leaders

Dates: Thursday, April 7, 2022
Time: 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. EDT

Data governance is now a crucial part of corporate strategy for all industries. Business leaders must understand both how to maximize the value of their data, and the governance, security, and privacy tools required to protect that value.

Join Torys' data governance and strategy team for an important series on managing the data life cycle. The series will provide practical takeaways for the complete spectrum of data management for businesses, including board governance, crisis and breach management, data sharing and licensing, dispute resolution strategy, and more.

Register Here

Web Seminar: LIMRA – Insurance Immersion: Connect With Success

Dates: April 11-14, 2022

This year, resolve to enhance your industry acumen by attending Insurance Immersion. It's an acclaimed training program that delivers essential life insurance and wealth knowledge for professionals from all functional areas and job levels who seek to broaden their understanding of the business.

Top 5 Benefits of the Program:

- CanCon: This made-in-Canada program provides a comprehensive overview of the Canadian market in certain areas
- Expert Instruction
- Fast and Effective
- Virtually Convenient
- Great Value

Register Here

Back to Table Of Contents

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

Web Seminar: Torys – The New Bank Act Consumer Protection Framework: What It Means For Your Business

Dates: Tuesday, April 12, 2022
Time: 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. EDT

Understanding how the *Bank Act*'s new regulations impact the consumer protection framework will be critical business in the financial services industry from mid-2022. Join our multidisciplinary team for this series as they explore key issues and challenges of the framework before it comes into force on June 30, 2022.

It has been two years since the implementation of amendments to the *Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act* that increased the administrative penalties available to the Commissioner. Hear from Brigitte Goulard, co-head of the firm's consumer protection practice, and litigators Sarah Whitmore and Gillian Dingle on their observations as to how the FCAC has changed its practices following the implementation of these new amendments, and how decisions released following the amendments have changed to reflect the new statutory regime.

Register Here

Web Seminar: McMillan – Deciphering The Right To Disconnect: What Does This Mean For Ontario, And What Could Happen In Other Provinces?

Dates: April 19, 2022
Time: 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. EDT

The Ontario government passed legislation containing the "right to disconnect". Or did they? (they didn't). But Ontario employers with 25 or more employees have to have a policy on the right to disconnect as of June 2. How should employers approach the policy, manage employee expectations and is the rest of Canada looking to follow suit?

Topics include:

- Definition of "disconnecting from work"
- Legislative overview and what it provides
- Practical legal and non-legal considerations
- Implementing the policy

Register Here

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

Web Seminar: Digital Insurance – Accelerated Trends Driving Digital Disruption In Insurance

Dates: April 19, 2022
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT

In this webinar, industry experts from OneSpan and Smart Communications will share the top trends for streamlining a carrier's digital engagement model to drive improved CX. They will also provide guidance for how insurers can supercharge their growth trajectories by investing in innovation that improves customer experiences, grows their business, and enhances agent satisfaction.

Trends will include:

- Creating more human-digital customer experiences that inject personal touchpoints in remote channels
- Increasing personalization with intelligent forms-based processes that orchestrate individualized experiences
- Delivering frictionless digital services in the customer engagement process
- How to build trust across channels in the digital agreement process

Register Here

Web Seminar: York University – Essential One-Day Update In Regulatory Compliance And Legal Risk Management For Financial Institutions

Dates: April 26, 2022
Time: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. EDT

This intensive, one-day update will equip you with crucial regulatory and industry updates, forecasts and evolving expectations. Industry leaders will provide practical guidance and tactical insights to manage key legal and operational risks and emerging trends, implement forward-looking corporate values and drive your organization's coordination strategies to the next level.

You will get:

- Crucial industry updates for the financial services sector in the current economy
- Regulators' current and future priorities, expectations and coordination efforts
- Strategies for assessing priorities and proportionality with evolving business needs and operational risks and challenges, regardless of organization size
- Tactics for navigating transitions, mitigating drivers of misconduct risk, and implementing enterprise-wide strategic solutions to adapt to evolving expectations
- Market conduct and fair treatment of customers – what will be enough?
- Ethical use of technology and digital innovations – how to satisfy business and regulatory obligations?

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

- Best practices for managing data, privacy, cybersecurity and other digital risks, while staying on side with obligations and also maximizing opportunities

Register Here

Web Seminar: McMillan – Head In The Clouds: Understanding Cloud Agreements

Dates: Wednesday, May 11, 2022
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT

The cloud has opened up several opportunities for service providers to expand their business offerings while keeping tighter controls over their technology and related assets. At the same time, customers have an opportunity to access technology and related services at a more manageable price point.

In this session, we will discuss some of the legal benefits and risks for both a service provider and a customer to move into the cloud by diving into some of the key provisions which you would expect to see in a cloud agreement and an analysis of the practical considerations which a business should keep in mind when considering offering or accessing cloud services.

Register Here