

Qalipu launches pilot to improve Medical Transportation Benefit claims processing service

As of January 2nd, members of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation (QMFN) from the wards of Gander Bay, Glenwood and Exploits who are living in Atlantic Canada, should see a faster return on their Medical Transportation Benefit claims thanks to a pilot project that will significantly reduce wait times on claim processing.

The Medical Transportation Benefit is an element of the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB), a health plan which all members of QMFN, and other First Nations and Inuit in Canada, are entitled to receive. The benefit provides financial compensation, based on rates set by Health Canada, for the cost of travel, meals, and accommodations to members with a health condition requiring travel to locations outside their communities to receive necessary medical services.

Members who are eligible for the benefit may submit a claim to have a portion of their costs recovered. At present, Qalipu members in Atlantic Canada taking advantage of this benefit complete a form and send it to Halifax to be processed by a representative of Health Canada.

“The Halifax office handles claims for all First Nations and Inuit of Atlantic Canada, not just Qalipu, so members, in the past, have experienced wait times as long as 6-8 weeks. Qalipu has determined that we can better serve our members by offering this service through our own offices, right here in Newfoundland.” Says Brendan Sheppard, Chief of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation. “The guidelines of the benefit will remain the same however, taking on this role will improve not only the timeliness of claims processing for members, but also allow Qalipu greater independence and fiscal efficiency.”

To test the process of handling, and paying out, these claims in-house, the Qalipu First Nation has begun a three-month pilot program focused on managing claims of the Medical Transportation Benefit. The pilot will allow claims processing for members belonging to the wards of Gander Bay, Glenwood and Exploits who are living in Atlantic Canada, to be completed directly from Qalipu's Corner Brook office.

Howard Thistle, Non-insured Health Benefits Navigator notes, “For Qalipu, due diligence is important and that means testing the process first. Following an evaluation of the pilot in April, 2015, we will advise members when we anticipate being able to offer the service to all Qalipu First Nation members living in Atlantic Canada.”

Members of the Qalipu First Nation who are not a part of the wards participating in this pilot project are reminded to continue using the system already in place which means sending their claims to the regional office that corresponds with their location. Members in the pilot project wards can send their claims to this address: Jody Davis, Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band, 3 Church Street, Corner Brook, NL, A2H 2Z4

To find more details on who, and what, is covered with this benefit please view the [Medical Transport Q&A](#) or contact Howard Thistle, toll-free, at 1-855-675-5743