

own residency requirements. A typical requirement is that you are physically present in the province for at least six months a year. These requirements are not related to residency for tax purposes. You can lose your entitlement to provincial health care and still be liable for both federal and provincial income taxes.

If you lose your provincial health care coverage, you may have to wait three months to requalify for coverage after your return. Check with provincial health care authorities to find out the specific conditions that will apply to you. Ask for information on the length of time you can be out of the country without losing your health care coverage.

Supplementary Insurance

Even if you plan to return to Canada soon enough to avoid losing your provincial health care coverage, it is still advisable to have private health care insurance, mainly to cover the extra cost of medical services received abroad.

Supplementary insurance offers benefits for people covered by a Canadian provincial health care plan. This type of insurance is relatively inexpensive since it covers only unexpected short-term health

problems. You are expected to return to Canada for treatment of pre-existing medical conditions or long-term health problems. Most of these policies include coverage for emergency evacuation to Canada; in many cases, evacuation is mandatory for serious problems. You can claim the cost of foreign medical expenses, including insurance premiums, as an income tax deduction.

You should obtain supplementary insurance before you leave Canada. Check the following points when purchasing such health care insurance:

- Does the insurer require that your government health insurance plan remain in effect?
- Does the insurer have an in-house worldwide emergency hotline you can call if you are in trouble? Is this hotline open 24 hours a day, seven days a week? Is the operator multilingual? Does the insurer have nurses or physicians on staff?
- Are foreign hospital and related medical costs paid directly or are you required to pay up-front and seek reimbursement later?
- Will the insurer provide a cash deposit in advance if a hospital requires it?