



MEDIA RELEASE

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Disability Management Excellence Initiative Gains Support of Major BC Employers

VICTORIA, BC – The National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) has been given a one-time \$1-million dollar grant from the BC Government to fund a new Disability Management Excellence initiative and plans to put the money to work providing grants for BC employers to improve the disability management (DM) and return to work (RTW) programs in their workplaces in accordance with an international best practices standard.

The goal of the DMExcellence initiative is to have as many BC public and private sector employers as possible adopt an international best practice benchmark standard in disability management and return to work. The standard is set by the International Disability Management Standards Council (IDMSC), administrators of the Consensus Based Disability Management Audit (CBDMA) and the Workplace Disability Management Assessment (WDMA), developed in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), a UN sub-organization. There are 14 countries involved in implementing the standards, as well as Labour Canada and a number of workers' compensation boards.

"I'd like to congratulate the British Columbia government on its leadership – provincially, nationally and internationally – in making this Disability Management Excellence initiative a reality," says Viateur Camiré, NIDMAR Employer Co-Chair and Vice-President Human Resources, AbitibiBowater, one of Canada's largest manufacturing companies. "Effective Disability Management programs are of major importance to Canadian employers as we not only deal with escalating disability related costs but also with many contemporary labour market challenges such as increasing incidences of mental health issues, and an aging workforce requiring accommodations."

Groundswell of Support Grows for DMExcellence

With funding and support from the British Columbia Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance under its Disability Strategy, DMExcellence is also benefiting from the support of the following sponsors:

- WorkSafeBC
- Healthcare Benefit Trust
- BC Human Resources Management Association

Cont'd: Groundswell of Support Grows

Former WorkSafeBC President and CEO Ralph McGinn will chair a DMExcellence Advisory Committee that will process employer applications for grants of up to \$5,000 to conduct a Consensus Based Disability Management Audit (CBDMA), up to \$2,500 for a shorter Workplace Disability Management Assessment (WDMA), and up to \$10,000 to implement and improve disability management practices in the workplace.

The DMExcellence initiative has earned high praise from the Business Council of BC, with President and CEO Virginia Greene noting "that it will go a long way towards raising the participation of persons with disabilities into the British Columbia labour force." Unions are on board with the initiative's consensus-based approach as well, including Canada's largest private sector union, the 280,000-member strong United Steelworkers (USW) in Canada.

Ken Neumann, Labour Co-Chair of NIDMAR and Canadian National Director of the USW says, "In order to attain our financial, societal and personal goals, meaningful employment is as essential to people with disabilities as it is to most others in our society. Unfortunately, people with disabilities are all too often marginalized in our society, especially when they have been out of the labour force too long. Only through effective joint Disability Management programs, ensuring that on-set of a disabling condition does not sever an existing employment relationship, can we have a significant impact on this sad reality."

BC Employers Represent Provincial Cross-section

A number of major BC employers – representing a broad cross-section from forestry, health and airport authorities to the public sector, municipalities, school districts, insurance companies and universities to retailers and the legal, accounting and financial professions – have already agreed to undergo the CBDMA and are challenging other organizations in their industry sectors to have a disability management benchmark assessment conducted in their workplaces as well.

Anne Harvey, Vice President Employee Engagement at Vancouver Coastal Health Authority is one of the committed employers signing on with the BC Government and NIDMAR initiative designed to remove barriers, restore lives and reduce costs of disability.

"The aging health professional workforce and the relentless demand for health services is a head-on challenge, and health care employers are looking for every opportunity to manage these two forces. Our older workers have much to give to the health system. Many of them have disabilities, either due to chronic health conditions or to injuries. We must commit to finding ways to bring them back as contributing members of our workforce."

Cont'd: Cross-section of BC employers

Other organizations participating as launch partners for the initiative include:

Borden Ladner Gervais LLP
British Importers Ltd.
Canadian Pacific Railway
Canfor Corporation
City of Port Alberni
Island Timberlands LP
Phillips, Hager & North
School District No. 23, Central Okanagan
Teck Cominco
University of Northern British Columbia
Vancouver Airport Authority
Vancouver Coastal Health Authority

Michele Mawhinney, Vice President, Human Resources at Vancouver Airport Authority and Member of the BC Minister's Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities, is an avid supporter of the initiative.

"Ensuring we have effective accommodation strategies in place for our employees who acquire a disabling condition through either accident or disease, is critical for retaining highly skilled employees in today's competitive labour market. Today, I would like to challenge our business partners at YVR to assess their disability strategies and take any necessary steps for improvement."

For more information and to download an application for a Disability Management Excellence grant, British Columbia employers are invited to visit www.dmexcellence.ca

Founded in 1994, Victoria-based NIDMAR is an internationally recognized organization committed to reducing the human, social and economic costs of disability. NIDMAR's primary focus is the implementation of workplace-based reintegration programs, which international research has proven is the most effective way of restoring and maintaining workers' abilities, while reducing the costs of disability for workers, employers, government and insurance carriers. NIDMAR is supported by a broad-based Board of Directors and is the Secretariat for the International Disability Management Standards Council (IDMSC), with senior representatives from 14 member countries. For more, visit www.nidmar.ca

- 30 -

Media Contacts (*Photos are available on request of the DMExcellence Initiative funding announcement on June 9 at the Pan Pacific Hotel with the Minister of Employment and Income Assistance Claude Richmond and NIDMAR Executive Director Wolfgang Zimmermann*):

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