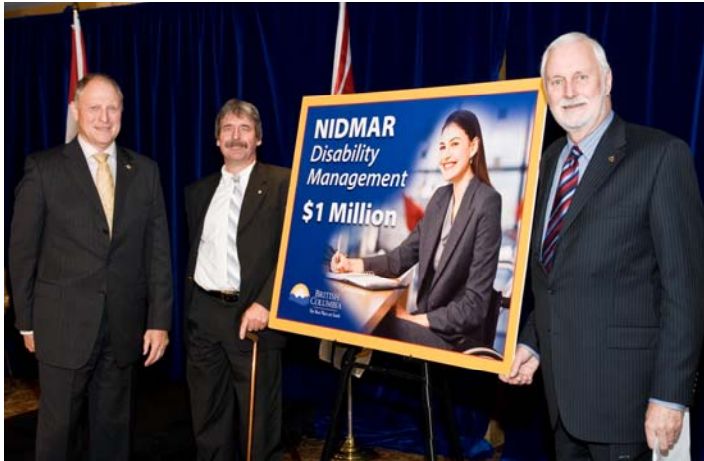


DM Excellence Initiative Announced



L to R: Ron Cantelon, MLA Nanaimo-Parksville; Wolfgang Zimmermann, Executive Director, NIDMAR; and The Honourable Claude Richmond, Minister of Employment and Income Assistance.

Restoring lives – Reducing costs

About 80 individuals from government, companies and unions and their representatives joined NIDMAR Board members at a press conference on Monday, June 9 in Vancouver to launch the Disability Management Excellence initiative. The event, organized by the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, announced the BC Government's \$1-million grant to assist in encouraging as many BC public and private sector employers as possible to adopt an international best practice benchmark standard in disability management and return to work.

The Honourable Claude Richmond, Minister of Employment and Income Assistance, MLA Ron Cantelon, and NIDMAR Executive Director Wolfgang Zimmermann were joined on the speaker's podium by Michele Mawhinney, Vice President, Human Resources for the Vancouver Airport Authority and a Member of the Minister's Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities, as well as by Linda Nkemdirim, Manager, Occupational Health Services, Canadian Pacific Railway.

Ms. Nkemdirim said, "At CPRail, our employees are our business partners, shareholders and workers. For that reason, we cannot afford to lose any of them if we can help it. This is why CPRail is participating in the Disability Management Excellence initiative. We are confident that this initiative will help us to improve our RTW program, maintain our commitment to keep all our employees in BC on the job, including those with disabilities, act as a role model to other employers, and contribute to achieving the objectives of the BC Disability Management Excellence initiative.

The first wave of employers undergoing the Consensus Based Disability Management Audit (CBDMA) under the initiative is already underway. The 13 organizations that signed on as DMExcellence launch partners will be audited this summer and fall.

Metro Vancouver employers provide reasons for their participation

A number of Metro Vancouver sponsors and employers set an example for others around the province and here are some of their reasons why:



*Sponsors of the DMExcellence initiative
L to R: Nan Bennett, CEO, Healthcare Benefit Trust; The Honourable Claude Richmond, Minister of Employment and Income Assistance; Simon Evans, CEO, BC Human Resources Management Association; Joanne McConnachie, Director, Executive Operations, WorkSafeBC; and Werner Schulz, Director, Integrated Health and Disability Management Services, Healthcare Benefit Trust.*

“The BC Human Resources Management Association is delighted to be connected with the Disability Management Excellence initiative. Not only does BC HRMA fully support this vital step in enabling more workers to return to work, the association also aims to significantly contribute to the program as a communications vehicle to the more than 4,400 BC HRMA members working in the field of HR. As a lead promoter of the program, BC HRMA endorses this opportunity for an international benchmark standard in disability management with the goal of increasing provincial awareness about securing meaningful employment for those with disabilities,” said Simon Evans, CHRP, CEO, BC Human Resources Management Association.

Raf Sansalone, Human Resources Manager at Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, acknowledged that even companies with a low injury rate can participate. “We recognize that disability management issues are present within white collar environments, and hope that BLG’s participation in this initiative will encourage other professional service firms in British Columbia to participate in the DMExcellence initiative. Having employees off work is disruptive to our work teams, costly to the organization and has a negative effect on staff morale. A well defined and well managed program will result in employees returning to work earlier and to more easily resume their pre-disability role and responsibilities.”

Diane Kelly, Human Resources, Phillips, Hager & North noted, “We believe that it is important for all employers to adopt an international best practice benchmark standard in return to work and disability management as the human and economic impact of disabilities is considerable in our society. Having an effective program in place helps employees avoid or reduce the time and uncertainties that are associated with being on a disability leave, and helps employers deal with the costs and loss of productivity.”

Overall, support for the initiative has been wide-ranging and organizations have signed on from many different areas of the province representing the public and private sector; small, medium and large entities; as well as those with primarily occupational, non-occupational or a cross-section of disabling conditions.

Prince George employers lead the way

In the northern BC city of Prince George, two of the largest employers in the region were big supporters from the outset.



Launch Partners attending the announcement on June 9, L to R: Sheila Keith, Director, Purchasing, Contract & Risk Management, UNBC; Gabe Somjen, Partner, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP; Mike Cass, Director, Human Resources, Island Timberlands LP; Mayor Ken McRae, City of Port Alberni; The Honourable Claude Richmond, Minister of Employment and Income Assistance; Catherine Fast, Manager, Early Intervention & Disability Prevention, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority; Raf Sansalone, Human Resources Manager, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP; Rob Stewart, Vice President, Human Resources, Canfor; Diane Kelly, Human Resources, Phillips, Hager & North; Michele Mawhinney, Vice President, Human Resources, Vancouver Airport Authority; Linda Nkemdirim, Manager, Occupational Health Services, Canadian Pacific Railway; Adrienne Hook, Manager, Claims Management Centre, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority; Debbie Blaney, Regional Director, Retention and Recruitment, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. Missing from the photo were representatives from British Importers Ltd.; Okanagan Regional Library; School District No. 23, Central Okanagan; and Teck Cominco.

Rob Stewart, Vice President, Human Resources, Canfor had this to say. “The rehabilitation and reintegration of disabled workers into the workplace is the right thing to do. This is why Canfor has been a long time supporter of NIDMAR and now the establishment of the Disability Management Excellence initiative. There are enormous benefits of having a comprehensive disability management program.

For Canfor, it allows for the retention of skilled workers through early return to productive employment and strengthens the culture of safety and safe work practices on the job site. We are especially encouraged by the development of an audit protocol from external sources as a way in which to enhance the credibility of the initiative and promote continuous improvement.”

Eileen Bray, Chief Financial Officer, University of Northern British Columbia, outlined the university’s reasons for taking part. “UNBC is excited to be a participant in the Disability Management Excellence initiative as it will greatly enhance the University’s goal of creating and maintaining physical, intellectual and social access to the University for persons with disabilities. We are committed to providing access and reasonable accommodations to the public, employees, and academically qualified persons so that, whenever possible, such persons may be included in all aspects of the University experience. This initiative will allow us to build on our successes and to identify areas to be enhanced so that UNBC will be recognized as a leader among BC Public Sector employers in this field.”

Organizations sign on in the southern interior

Ken Emmons, District Health & Safety Manager, School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan) sees the initiative as a way to reduce the negative impact on injury and illness on workers and their families.

“School District No. 23 firmly believes that an effective Disability Management Program is an integral part of its comprehensive Occupational Safety Program. To that end we are committed to the well-being and rehabilitation of all our employees who may be unable to perform their normal duties as a result of being injured, on or off the job, or who are recuperating from an illness.

Not only does an effective DM program foster an early and safe return to work, minimize the negative impact of the injury or illness on the immediate family and friends,



and build a trusting relationship between both our unions and management through a continually improving feeling of cooperation, it's also the right thing to do.”

Vancouver Island employers participate

Mayor Ken McRae, City of Port Alberni, noted the Vancouver Island municipality has a long history of supporting NIDMAR and its Executive Director, Wolfgang Zimmermann. “The City of Port Alberni is one of NIDMAR’s oldest and strongest supporters. Born in the Alberni Valley to aid the plight of workers disabled in the forestry industry, NIDMAR has now grown into an internationally recognized organization dedicated to supporting disabled workers in all sectors. NIDMAR’s Disability Management Excellence initiative audit is an effective tool for organizations striving to develop their disability management program and improve return to work outcomes. The City supports this initiative. We would also encourage all municipal governments across BC to support this initiative.”

In Victoria, retailer and small business owner Philip Nyren, President of British Importers Ltd. had practical reasons for becoming a launch partner. “It is important in today’s tight labour market to find and secure quality employees – some of those employees might be disabled and not presently working – my reason for taking part in this audit is to help such employees find us. This is not at all altruistic; it’s entirely selfish and about getting and keeping good employees.”

Darshan Sihota, President, Island Timberlands LP, based in Nanaimo, challenged other BC forest companies to participate. “Island Timberlands is proud to participate with the Province and NIDMAR in launching the Disability Management Excellence Initiative as an ‘early adopter.’ This Disability Management Excellence initiative supports and strengthens the key elements of our existing safety management system, and we believe that this initiative is a key factor in any successful forest business. We challenge other forest companies to join with us, the Province and NIDMAR in embracing this important initiative.”

For more information on the Disability Management Excellence initiative, please visit the website at: www.dmexcellence.ca