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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

### **People with injuries, disabilities supported getting back to work**

VICTORIA – In celebration of B.C. Disability Employment Month, people with disabilities or recovering from a physical injury or mental-health challenge will receive extra help in their recovery and safe return to work thanks to \$4 million in funding to the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR).

September is Disability Employment Month, highlighting the significant role people with disabilities play in British Columbia’s workforce, while also promoting resources and tools employers can use to reduce barriers to inclusion and build better, more accessible workplaces.

NIDMAR will design and develop a project that will provide early intervention through effective occupational rehabilitation for people who are unable to work due to injury or disability. This intervention could include healthcare support, ergonomic assistance, job coaching, medical exams, and other assistance needed to maintain employment.

“An inclusive B.C. means all British Columbians receive employment support if needed to find meaningful work,” said Susie Chant, Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility. “This funding for NIDMAR supports employers in establishing and sustaining workplaces that are barrier-free, thus ensuring all British Columbians can be part of our workforce.”

People out of work due to injury, illness or disability need care and support on their journey back to their jobs. Through early intervention and effective occupational rehabilitation, NIDMAR will support approximately 500 people in their return to work over the three years of this pilot project. The project’s first sites will help people in urban and rural areas of Nanaimo, Vancouver, Kelowna and Prince George.

“After suffering a serious spinal cord injury in an industrial accident many decades ago, it was the commitment from the company and union which allowed me to return to work,” said Wolfgang Zimmermann, executive director of NIDMAR. “We very much appreciate the support of the Province, enabling us to develop new and innovative approaches designed to support employers and disabled workers in maintaining/regaining the all-important employment link.”

This \$4-million provincial grant comes from the 2022-23 Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement. Under the agreement, the Province receives more than \$300 million each year to fund employment services and supports, including those provided through the 102 WorkBC centres throughout the province.

“Disability Employment Month reminds us of the importance of a barrier-free society, where everyone belongs,” said Randy Boissonnault, federal Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages. “Organizations like NIDMAR empower persons with disabilities to succeed through their inclusive training programs. I look forward to seeing the

benefits this project will bring to people across B.C.”

Investing in projects such as this with NIDMAR is part of StrongerBC’s Future Ready plan to make education and training more accessible, affordable and relevant to prepare British Columbians for the jobs of tomorrow, reduce poverty and help tackle the ongoing labour shortage.

**Quotes:**

**Joan Phillip – MLA for Vancouver-Mountain Pleasant –**

“This project benefits all British Columbians. With B.C. experiencing the effects of a nationwide labour-market shortage, we can’t afford to lose the talents and skills of people who became out of work because of injuries, illness or disabilities”

**Kathy Hatchard, Adjunct Faculty Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences, Occupational Therapist –**

“Having experienced acute mental illness and arduous recovery, my perspective is broad-based and evolving. The support I received made it possible to have a career. I am inspired by this project as it will focus on the individual’s needs, early intervention and guided recovery.”

**Quick Facts:**

- More than 926,000 British Columbians over age 15 years live with a disability.
- More than 80% of mental and physical impairments emerge during a person’s work life, and less than 1% will work again if they are not back within the first year after becoming disabled.

**Learn More:**

Employment resources for people with disabilities: <https://www.workbc.ca/Resources-for/People-with-Disabilities.aspx>

National Institute of Disability Management and Research: <https://www.nidmar.ca>

**Contact:**

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