



Investing in **Comprehensive Workplace Health Promotion** – The Healthy Workplace Initiative

Employee absences cost Canadian employers an estimated \$8.6 billion a year.

- The Globe and Mail, November 6 2002

Does diabetes affect your biggest asset?

Over two million Canadians have diabetes. By 2010 that number is expected to increase to three million. Diabetes is a leading cause of death by disease—people with diabetes are four times more likely to have heart disease. Diabetes is a leading cause of adult blindness. People with diabetes account for one-third of new cases of serious kidney disease. Diabetes is the leading cause of non-traumatic amputations.

Diabetes costs the Canadian healthcare system an estimated \$9 billion annually.

Type 2 diabetes is largely preventable. So are its complications!

Looking after your organization's biggest asset

Comprehensive workplace health promotion is an approach to protecting and enhancing the health of employees. It relies on the efforts of employers to create a supportive management culture, and then builds on the initiative of its employees to take the lead in their own well-being.

Comprehensive workplace health promotion is not a particular program. It is a philosophy, theory and practice of health promotion that is intended and designed to be incorporated into the strategic business plans of corporations whose governors, owners and managers care about the well-being of their employees.

"There is mounting evidence that workplace health promotion programming, when included in a broader, more integrated perspective on factors that affect employee health, can result in cost savings, higher productivity, and higher levels of employee engagement in organizations."

- The Conference Board of Canada

Know who to turn to



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“As the labour market tightens, workplace health promotion programs can be used as part of an organization’s strategy for managing human capital and becoming an ‘employer of choice.’ This approach can be used in an organization’s triple-bottom line reporting, where economic, environmental, and social factors are used to evaluate how well an organization is contributing to a community’s overall well-being.”

- The Conference Board of Canada

Affecting your bottom-line

The Canadian Diabetes Association is confident that adopting comprehensive workplace health promotion can make strong in-roads to the prevention of type 2 diabetes. For a corporation, the investment in comprehensive workplace health promotion can mean happier and healthier employees, resulting in

- Reduced benefits costs
- Improved employee retention
- Improved absenteeism rate
- Increased productivity
- Improved corporate profile

Examples of practicing comprehensive workplace health promotion are

- Encouraging healthy living
- Promoting empowerment, teamwork and collaboration
- Providing a healthy work environment
- Creating a work-life balance

Senior executive commitment is key to the success of investing in comprehensive workplace health promotion principles. To be successful, comprehensive workplace health promotion programming must be tied into the organizational goals and strategic plan of a corporation, and nurtured from senior management.

Committing to comprehensive workplace health promotion

The financial and time commitment a corporation makes to comprehensive workplace health promotion can vary greatly depending on the needs and expectations of the corporation. Comprehensive workplace health promotion is open-ended, that is, it is an ongoing work in progress. It can be constantly updated and improved through experience.

■ *B.C. Hydro estimated that it saved \$3 in healthcare costs for every dollar spent on comprehensive workplace health promotion.*



The proof is in the numbers!

Recent case studies show mounting evidence that the long-term efforts of investing in comprehensive workplace health promotion are resulting in the improved overall health and productivity of organizations.

The Canadian Business and Labour Centre and the *National Quality Institute* have been following initiatives in several corporations including Amex, Dofasco and MDS Nordion. Key observations reported are:

■ DOFASCO

The company's payments to the Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) have dropped considerably. The annual assessment went from \$4.71 per \$100 of payroll in 1995 to \$1.76 per \$100 of payroll in 2001. From 1995 to 1998, the company's payments in total to the WSIB were reduced by more than \$6 million.

■ MDS NORDIAN

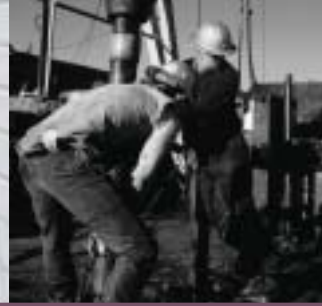
Since 1994, the company's turnover rate has stayed at just over 6%, compared to the high-tech industrial average of 10%. Annual sick day usage has declined to less than four days per person average per year, compared to the Canadian average of 7.4 days, and lost time injuries dropped to an all-time low of 0.25 injuries per 100 person-years.

■ AMEX

Over 40% of employees (who participated in the survey) would like to stay with Amex for ten or more years. This number reflects a high level of satisfaction among employees. It also suggests relatively low turnover rates in the future and, thus, lower recruitment costs.

More complete case studies can be found on *The Canadian Business and Labour Centre* website at <http://www.clbc.ca>.

■ *University of Michigan found that for every \$1 spent, it saved \$1.50 to \$2.50 on healthcare costs and absenteeism.*



The link between your biggest asset and chronic disease

The principles of comprehensive workplace health promotion are broad and can have far-reaching effects in corporations, however, the impact on the prevention and management of chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease is unimaginable!

Corporate decision-makers have the power to influence and affect enough change in their workforce to turn the tides on chronic disease in Canada. By committing to the principles of comprehensive workplace health promotion, and building them into organizational goals and strategic plans, organizations can help halt this impending epidemic, and keep valued employees healthier, happier and productive!

There is strong evidence to show that when workplaces are managed according to the principles of comprehensive workplace health promotion employees are more motivated and able to care for themselves by eating properly, maintaining a healthy bodyweight, getting enough exercise, sleep and recreation, managing stress effectively and using medications appropriately.

In other words, healthy workplaces have a significantly positive impact on the lifestyle factors that place employees at risk for type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, anxiety and depression and a variety of other problems related to immune system functioning. Risk reduction through improved personal health practices translates into lowered health-related costs to corporations and to improved employee productivity.

And if type 2 diabetes and other diseases can be prevented by living a healthy lifestyle, then so, too, can its complications — heart disease, kidney disease, adult blindness and amputation. Living a healthy lifestyle can make a big dent in the \$9 billion spent annually on managing diabetes in Canada.

“By 2010 diabetes will have reached epidemic proportions—three million Canadians will have diabetes. Type 2 diabetes can be prevented, and we know that efforts in the workplace make a difference!”

*- Michael Howlett,
President and Chief
Executive Officer,
Canadian Diabetes
Association*

■ One telecommunications firm found that a program focussed on short-term disability of 1,628 employees lowered the average net days lost, with a potential savings in excess of \$1,371,600 over two years.



Working Together

Health Canada

Health Canada has partnered with the *Canadian Diabetes Association Healthy Workplace Initiative* through the Diabetes Prevention Strategy, a five-year \$115 million initiative to help prevent diabetes.

Health Canada through the *Workplace Health Bureau*, is equally committed to the creation and maintenance of a healthy workplace.

We are pleased to base the *Healthy Workplace Initiative* on the work and principles of the *Workplace Health Bureau (Health Canada)*, the *National Quality Institute* and *Dr. Martin Shain S.J.D., Senior Scientist, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health*. We believe that their tools, such as the *Business Health Investment Plan, Workplace Health System* and *Business Health Culture Index*, will enable Canadian organizations to help reduce the number of Canadians with type 2 diabetes.

In addition to the tools above, *Health Canada* and the *National Quality Institute* have developed the *Canadian Healthy Workplace Criteria* to recognize the value and success of comprehensive workplace health promotion programs. This criteria works as a roadmap for corporations in any sector who wish to encourage, support and offer exemplary health-related programs in their workplace.

Funding for this publication was provided by Health Canada.

Next steps

The Canadian Diabetes Association is keen to help your organization move forward with such an important endeavour. Not only will this important step help your organization continue to be a leader in its industry, but it will build on its already

...continued

"Diabetes is now being recognized as a public health problem of potentially enormous proportions. Diabetes is ranked as the seventh leading cause of death in Canada (accounting for at least 5,500 deaths per year). But with its complications, diabetes is attributable for approximately 25,000 deaths per year."

- Health Canada



The Canadian Diabetes Association is committed to the prevention of type 2 diabetes.

strong and sound base of organizational health, ultimately helping to prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes and its complications.

The Canadian Diabetes Association is committed to working with you and assisting wherever it can. Our team will work with you to determine and execute your next steps, including how to use the ***Business Health Investment Plan, Workplace Health System and Business Health Culture Index***. It will also link you to the various organizations, consultants and programs and services available in your community that can help you to successfully introduce comprehensive workplace health promotion to your organization.

The Canadian Diabetes Association

With a presence in over 150 communities across the country, the Canadian Diabetes Association promotes the health of Canadians through diabetes research, education and advocacy. Together with its sections and councils, its volunteers and employees, the Canadian Diabetes Association takes a leading role in supporting Canadians with by diabetes and their loved ones.

Resources

- A Four Step Guide to Building the Business Case for a Healthy Workplace, the National Quality Institute
- Canadian Healthy Workplace Criteria, the National Quality Institute
- Health Promotion Programs at Work A Frivolous Cost or a Sound Investment, the Conference Board of Canada
- Investing in Comprehensive Workplace Health Promotion, the National Quality Institute
- Issues of Workplace Health and Wellness - Case Studies, Canadian Labour and Business Centre

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