

The Ontario Action Group to Prevent Work Disability

The Ontario Summit to Prevent Work Disability was held in Toronto May 12-13, 2010.

The event was attended by more than 150 people of influence from various stakeholder groups to kick-off a collaborative process aimed at preventing the harm that results for employees, employers and the economy due to needless work disability. Needless work disability is lost time resulting from delays in communication, lack of modified work, and system disincentives, not because of the illness or injury itself.

The on-going collaborative has now taken form as The Ontario Action Group to Prevent Work Disability.

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario, expresses his support for the Ontario Summit to Prevent Work Disability stating "Our government recognizes the vital role that our partners in workplace health and safety play in creating safe and productive work environments. That is why I would like to commend all our partners in workplace health and safety for making this summit a reality."

The Ontario Action Group to Prevent Work Disability seeks to propagate a new model for preventing needless work disability. This model is described in a report called "Preventing Needless Work Disability by Helping People Stay Employed" written in 2006 by a group of American and Canadian physicians and published by the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM). The report makes 16 recommendations to shift the focus of compensation boards, insurance companies,

employers, unions, lawyers, legislators and the medical community beyond managing illnesses and injuries after the fact, towards putting in place solutions to avoid or put a timely end to unnecessary work disability.

The 16 ACOEM recommendations fall into four main groupings:

1. Adopt a disability prevention model.
2. Address behavioural and circumstantial realities that create or prolong work disability.
3. Acknowledge the powerful contribution that motivation makes to outcomes, and make changes to improve incentive alignment.
4. Invest in system and infrastructure improvements.

The Ontario Action Group to Prevent Work Disability is one of several action groups springing up throughout North America as part of the grassroots movement inspired by The 60 Summits project. The BC Collaborative for Health, Productivity and Disability Prevention (known as BCC) was the first Canadian action group developed following the BC Summit to Prevent Work Disability held in November 2008.

Members of the Ontario Action Group to Prevent Work Disability represent key stakeholder groups including: employees, employers, WSIB, insurers, unions, government, and healthcare. A number of projects generated through discussion at the Summit are currently underway.

The group's initial focus will be on communicating the message that:

- Disability is rarely required from a strictly medical point of view
- Urgency is required because prolonged time away from work is harmful

This initiative is endorsed by a number of non-profit organizations including: the Ontario Medical Association, Mental Health Commission of Canada, Canadian Mental Health Association and Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association.

Sponsors include Great West Life, Sunlife Insurance, Banyan Work Health Solutions Inc., Manulife Insurance, Rogers, Ontario Power Generation, Northern Lights Rehabilitation, Gowan Consulting, and Odyssey Health Solutions.

For more information refer to our website at www.60summits.org/on or contact executive committee members Terry O'Hearn (613)271-7655, Ann Morgan (647)924-4452 or Nancy Gowan (519) 670-4520.