

# **NEWS RELEASE**

**Op-Ed Piece September 30, 2011**



## **HEALTHY WORKPLACE SUPPORTS HEALTHY ECONOMY**

Research has shown that healthy workplaces have a positive effect on organizations and the individuals that work there, which in turn affect economic performance. 75% of workplace productivity losses are related to employee lifestyle choices<sup>1</sup>. Improved productivity, reduced absenteeism and turnover, fewer insurance and compensation claims and improved staff morale have been some of the outcomes observed in healthy workplaces.

Yet despite clear benefits of healthy workplaces, 62% of worksites do not offer a comprehensive wellness program in the workplace<sup>2</sup>, fewer than 33% have a budget, only 15% have an operating plan<sup>3</sup> and only 16% of Canadian HR managers regard wellness as a very important priority<sup>4</sup>. This indicates that most businesses are not treating health and wellness as a strategic imperative.

It is easy for organizations to drop or neglect these programs when the focus is on surviving challenging economic times but it is exactly the time for this not to occur. October is Healthy Workplace Month and the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) would like to take this opportunity to remind BC of how important healthy workplaces are to the long-term success of organizations and our economy, and what kind of assistance is available to incorporate wellness based programs and initiatives.

One of the top 3 barriers to implementing wellness for Canadian employers is lack of budget resources<sup>5</sup>. Companies need to know that there are many resources available to them free of charge from national and provincial agencies and not-for-profit associations, including the BCRPA. Resources include tools and templates to assist in the development of workplace wellness programs, facts and figures on the benefits of an active workplace, comprehensive workplace planning, step-by-step guides to implementing wellness programs, and recommended practices.

Companies that are creating healthy workplaces are reaping the benefits: BC Hydro employees enrolled in the fitness program had a turnover rate of 3.5% compared to company average of 10.3% (The Economic Benefits of Regular Exercise, IHSA 1996); the Canadian government's corporate wellness programs returned \$1.95-\$3.75 per employee per dollar spent (as reported by

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.forbes.com/2006/04/21/wellness-programs-gold-standards-cx\\_tz\\_0424wellness.html](http://www.forbes.com/2006/04/21/wellness-programs-gold-standards-cx_tz_0424wellness.html)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.buffettandcompany.com/BNWS2011/email1/NWS%202009%20ENGLISH.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Buffet, E. The Role of Prevention. *Canadian Healthcare Manager*, December 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Buffett, E. (2002). The Wellness Myth, *Benefits Canada*, 26, 2 pp.26-28

<sup>5</sup> Buffett & Company "National Wellness Survey Report 2009"

Dr. Roy Shephard). Workplaces are getting more involved with wellness initiatives - over the last two years the BCRPA has experienced a 46% increase in the number of companies participating in our Healthy Workplace Month initiatives - but more companies need to incorporate wellness initiatives, and offer them as part of a sustained wellness program.

Work takes up a significant amount of our daily lives. Incorporating physical activity and healthy active initiatives into that time period not only improves our overall well-being and quality of life, it also leads to greater individual and economic performance. And in times of increased rates of chronic disease, escalating health care costs and economic uncertainty, every step taken counts.

Suzanne Allard Strutt  
Chief Executive Officer  
BC Recreation and Parks Association

**Contact:**

Sarah Polson  
Communications Coordinator, BCRPA  
604-629-0965 ext 244  
[spolson@bcrpa.bc.ca](mailto:spolson@bcrpa.bc.ca)

For more information, visit: [www.bcrpa.bc.ca](http://www.bcrpa.bc.ca)