



@the window

views on organizational health + safety + wellness

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Leading the Healthy Workplace Shift



THIS YEAR ACROSS CANADA organizations are celebrating taking action to improve the health of our minds, bodies and the workplace during Healthy Workplace Month from October 5 to November 1.

One of the earliest leaders in Canada's healthy workplace movement is Dr. Graham Lowe of Great Place to Work Canada. He is a strong believer in the principle that the quality of work environments matters for employee

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Editorial Board

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HEALTHY WORKPLACE



Public Service Commission

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

well being, organizational performance and sustainable economic prosperity. He often speaks to leaders about creating healthy organizations and the importance of their roles in that change.

"It's hard work to create the kind of change that I'm referring to," he says in his video webcast called *Apples to Zen: Empowering Employee Wellness*. He highlights workplaces that have "created not only a healthy culture but also aligned the systems and structures of the organization to support people to be healthy and well at work."

Closer to home, one leader who is making a difference is David Darrow, deputy minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. "Culture change is the number one challenge for leaders," he says. "A healthy workplace takes place within a culture. It's not a culture unto itself. You can have great programs, but in order for them to work, you need the culture, too."

Leading that culture change takes a lot of little steps in many directions, beginning with reinforcing trust and openness in the leaders themselves. As David recounts, it was often the simplest steps that had the biggest effects.

"People want to have an opportunity to speak their minds, so I put a priority on getting out and meeting the employees across the province. I have a Dialogue with the Deputy program where employees can come and chat. I go over what I hear with the managers so employees know they're being heard."

"We've made great strides in employee recognition, too," he continues. In some cases, it's formal, such as their Minister's CLASS Act Award program, but the informal acknowledgements are just as important. "Thanking people for a job well done. Acknowledging their work. Asking about their family or a hobby. Treating them as people, not as machines. It all helps to open people up and shift the culture."

Today that culture shift is really paying off with a tremendous employee uptake in healthy workplace programs. "We're doing lunch time yoga, walking groups, having dieticians and nutritionists come in," says David. "You don't have to go far to find somebody whose life has changed because of our healthy workplace programs. It even showed up in the recent 'How's Work Going Survey'; employees are telling us they're enjoying the results."

As an employer, the department is also enjoying its own results, including reduced absenteeism and increased employee engagement, which David believes helps with retention and attraction.

"The benefits (of a healthy workplace) are huge,"



agrees Rosemary Lewis, District Manager of the North Sydney Office of the Department of Community Services. One way her department has been demonstrating an innovative leadership approach to healthy workplace is by inspiring employees to design and run the programs themselves.

"Our role as leaders was to model and communicate the change," says Rosemary. After that, it was all about supporting the informal leaders on staff who came forward with ideas to make it happen.

Those ideas, in the Eastern Region, included bowling and golf tournaments using an employee's Wii game, holding salad and smoothie bars where everybody contributed an ingredient, and holding weight-loss initiatives. "Some offices had Weight Watchers come in," says Rosemary, "and several of them did it themselves using *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* and basing it on the TV show 'The Biggest Loser.'" She notes that celebrating and having fun were keys to every success.

Recognition was also a part of the plan. "There's a very real connection between recognition and a healthy workplace," says Rosemary. "It doesn't cost anything and is another way managers can lead by example. Be sure to say hello to people. Be open to offering support. Say thank you. Build confidence so people know they can come and talk to you."

A healthy workplace fosters a supportive workplace culture, good physical and mental health, and a safe and healthy physical environment. Nova Scotia's Healthy Workplace Policy formally establishes the government's long-term commitment to a healthy workplace. While developing and sustaining a healthy workplace is a joint responsibility, leaders have an important role to play in helping to make this happen.

Healthy Workplace Month is a great time to reflect on what you are doing to lead the way. For ideas about what you can do in your own workplace, check out our corporate healthy workplace website at

www.gov.ns.ca/psc/v2/employeecentre/healthyworkplace

or visit the National

Healthy Workplace Month website at

www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca

A *Smashing* Idea!



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS JUST ONE ASPECT of a healthy workplace, however, it is one of the best ways to keep fit, stay healthy, relieve stress, and have fun.

The Department of Environment and the Department of Labour and Workforce Development (LWD) know this first hand. In keeping with a healthy workplace, they offer badminton at lunchtime to their employees.

On most Wednesdays and Fridays, from noon to 1:00 p.m., the departments rent out the DalTech gymnasium on Barrington Street, which has several badminton courts available. Over the course of an hour, doubles teams and singles matches take place. With about 14 Environment and LWD staff participating, a few staff from surrounding departments are also involved. The departments also use the DalTech gym and field for other fun physical activities including soccer, basketball, dodge ball, and frisbee.

This year, in June and July, the departments organized a badminton tournament and awarded

trophies and gift certificates to the top doubles team members, and prizes to the runner-up team members. Being such a success, they decided to hold the tournament every year and pass the trophies on to the winning team each year.

If you would like to learn more about how to set up a similar tournament in your department, contact Gwen Gorrill at 424-7443 or email gorrilge@gov.ns.ca.

GWEN GORRILL, ENVIRONMENT PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES LEAD
KIM KILFOIL, LWD HEALTHY WORKPLACES LEAD

From Left to Right:

Peter MacLeod, Stewart Sampson, Virginia Messervey, Wyatt White, Gwen Gorrill, Ben McBeth, Jeff Green, Kim Kilfoil, Yuri van der Leest, Scott Nicholson, Peter Dodge, Judy Peitzsche, and Tingting Han.

Missing from group photo: Sharon Cox, Chris Pierce, Paul Currie, Andrew Murphy, Jennifer Biddle.



Giving Back

WHEN SARAH BEGAN TEASING other children, the Boys and Girls Club of Preston became concerned. She tried to behave as if she was strong and independent, but she expressed her frustration and anger in an aggressive way. It was through the club's Junior Leadership Program that Sarah was paired with a staff member to assist in day-to-day activities. Sarah had found a positive outlet in which she was able to express herself in a constructive manner—she became a leader.*

Sarah is a real person, and her success story is one of many. Thousands turn to agencies and programs funded by the United Way's Community Fund like the Junior Leadership program, or Boys and Girls Clubs for help. Venues where youth, seniors, families, men, and women come together to volunteer and develop, overcome challenges, and create safer more vibrant neighbourhoods is what makes the United Way a driving force in our community—but they cannot do it alone.

The 2009 Provincial Government United Way Campaign, led by Health Promotion and Protection, is already in full swing with the Kickoff Celebration taking place at the Halifax Metro Centre on October 6, and the Day of Caring on October 7. And government employees are stepping forward in a big way.

In 2008, the campaign raised more than \$470,000, more than \$20,000 over the original goal. This year, the campaign hopes to beat that number by raising \$475,000.

To achieve this goal, a lot depends on volunteers. Across government, employees are volunteering their time by sitting on departmental United Way Committees, and organizing special events and activities to help fundraise.

When asked why do you volunteer for the United Way Campaign, Mary Lou Burke, Public Service Commission's Campaign Coordinator, says, "...as I became more involved and learned more about what the United Way really does, my question was, 'How could I not?'...I've learned that giving time does make a difference in people's lives and if I can help, albeit in a small way, then I will keep giving and giving."

The month of October marks National Healthy Workplace Month across Canada. Each week is dedicated to Taking Action, whether it is on your own, with your family, or your colleagues. The last week is themed around Giving Back to your community. Many Healthy Workplace Committees, along with Campaign Teams, are stepping up by incorporating United Way fundraising with their activities during the



month. These teams take it upon themselves to make the campaign a success and they play a vital role in promoting and bringing attention to the importance of employee support and participation.

Jeannette Sanchez-Smith, who is also on the PSC United Way Campaign and Healthy Workplace Committee, adds "Not everyone can donate a lot of money, but everyone one of us can donate our time, our creativity and our enthusiasm...we have a fabulous team this year at the Public Service Commission, which makes it fun to be part of."

Without the dedication and spirit of employee volunteers and donors, youth like Sarah may not have had the opportunity to reach her full potential or to exercise her skills and become a leader in the community.

So, when an e-mail reaches your inbox asking for your support, we encourage you to read it and become involved—because you may never know who you will be helping out in the end, but you will know, you are contributing and making a difference in your community.

For more information on Healthy Workplace Month contact the chair of your departmental committee. For information on the Provincial Government United Way Campaign, contact Gail Keeping, Executive Campaign Co-Chair at 424-2210, email keepingl@gov.ns.ca. You can also visit these websites:

www.gov.ns.ca/unitedway

www.unitedwayhalifax.ca/

www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca

RIMA THOMEH, PSC, HEALTHY WORKPLACE

* Sarah's story used with permission from 2009 United Way Campaign Tool Kit online at, **www.unitedwayhalifax.ca/raising-money/workplace-campaign/tool-kit**

PSC Corporate Learning Library

THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION'S Learning and Development Team would like to invite you to visit our Corporate Learning Library.

The library has collected numerous resources on our Leadership Competencies—Decisiveness, Strategic Orientation, Development of People, Team Leadership, Achievement Orientation, Self-Confidence/Courage of Convictions, Impact and Influence, and Relationship Building. Other resources also include Diversity and Career Planning.

For a detailed list, or to borrow from the library contact Tonya Fry via e-mail. If you wish to view the library, please drop by.

No more than two resources can be borrowed at any one time and library listings can be signed out for up to a three-week period. Lost or damaged resources will be replaced by the borrower.



Resources can be sent to you via interdepartmental mail, regular mail, or they can be picked up at the Reception Desk, suite 402 WTCC, 1800 Argyle Street Building.

For more information, please contact Tonya Fry, Learning and Development Consultant at 424-8362.

Healthy Mind, Healthy Body, Healthy Work ...Feeling Great about Life!



THAT'S THE THEME of Canada's national Healthy Workplace Month, which runs from October 5 to November 1. It's a time to focus on the importance of promoting a healthy workplace culture, and the significance it has on employees and departments.

The theme is about taking action. Each week is dedicated to a particular subject around feeling great about life at work, with family and friends, at play, and giving back to your community.

Each of us has as responsibility to take action during this month of celebration, and all year long. Individual employees, our departmental healthy workplace committees, and our provincial government as a whole are all working to make our workplaces healthier, safer, and more supportive.

So get out there, take action, participate, and learn... your workplace depends on it!

For more information and great resources, visit the national Healthy Workplace Month website at

**www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca or
www.gov.ns.ca/psc/healthyworkplace.**

Workplace Snack Attacks

ON AUGUST 19, the sound of children's voices could be heard coming from the Public Service Commission's 5th floor lunch room, where a healthy art showcase and reception was taking place. The Healthy Snack Box Café was host to Public Service Commission (PSC) employees at the World Trade Centre and their children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, who submitted artwork, as well as to promote the Healthy Snack Box Café's great service.

Not only did these colourful, healthy posters give The Healthy Snack Box Café a more inviting atmosphere, but they also prompted employees, as well as their family members, to recognize the importance of eating healthy foods and leading healthy lifestyles.

A ribbon cutting marked the very first healthy art showcase at the PSC with greetings from Gordon Adams, Executive Director, HR Service and Client Support, and an overview of the Healthy Snack Box Café by dietetic intern, Jessika Quigley. The highlight of the event was an exciting reading from the Dr. Seuss book entitled, *'Oh, the Things You Can Do That Are Good For You'* by Becky Macdonald, Business Transformation Consultant at the PSC, with the help of the young artists. Awards designed by Rima Thomeh, Healthy Workplace Assistant, were presented to the children to highlight their participation and a healthy 'Make Your Own Yogurt Parfait' party followed.

The entire event was a fun and exciting way to engage the younger family members of PSC employees in the practice of healthy eating, and for every member of the family to follow.

The Healthy Snack Box Café, in operation since July 2009, has observed a high volume of sales, which can only mean one thing—PSC employees are healthy snackers. The café has offered a wide range of products—some local—such as fresh fruits and vegetables, low fat cheeses and yogurt, as well as its very own trail mix called Healthy Workplace Mix. There have also been foods that people have purchased when lunch was forgotten at home such as the Tuna Snack Kits, which continue to be a product in high demand.

The Healthy Snack Box Café's goal was to provide a healthy food service within the convenience of PSC employees' own workplace, as well as make the healthy food options available for purchase at a price set to cover the costs. The pilot project was extended from three to six weeks. Although a huge success, it has more importantly contributed to developing a healthier workplace environment, which supports employees' efforts to eat better and live healthier lifestyles.

The Healthy Snack Box Café is continuing to operate within the PSC and a toolkit developed by Jessika Quigley will be made available soon on the corporate Healthy Workplace website at www.gov.ns.ca/psc/healthyworkplace to assist departments in starting their very own healthy snacking ventures!

JESSIKA QUIGLEY, DIETETIC INTERN, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION, HEALTHY WORKPLACE



Family Relationships

FALL IS A BUSY TIME for a lot families. Kids are starting or returning to school, routines are changing, and extracurricular activities are beginning. The day often begins with rushing out the door and ends with a flurry of activity and homework. When our schedules are full, sometimes our family relationships get put on the back burner. Instead of making the time for play, conversation, and connection, we may just feel overwhelmed and stressed.

There are a few things we can do to stay focused on what's important to us...our relationships with each other.



Build opportunities to enhance communication.

Communication goes beyond just talking, it also involves listening to what others have to say. Communication within the family is extremely important because it enables members to express their needs, wants, and concerns to each other. See if you can create times where your family can enjoy talking with each other. After our children have been with friends all day at school, they need to re-connect with their family. Sit down and have a family dinner a few times a week. Ask your children about their day at school and your partner about his/her day at work. All too often, our children want to vent after being separated from us all day. Although it's not easy being a sounding board, being heard is exactly what a child needs after being separated from you all day.



Identify barriers to positive family relationships.

One of the most difficult challenges facing families today is finding time to spend together. Balancing our work and family obligations, scheduled activities, and media distractions (TV, ipods, etc.) can be difficult to find enough time to spend with one another in meaningful conversation. Talk in the car; turn the TV off and eat dinner together; schedule informal or formal family meetings to talk about important issues that affect your family; and talk to your children at bedtime.

Spend quality family time together.

A family who plays together stays together is the message. Family time makes it possible for family members to communicate with each other, build common memories, and develop love for each other. Families spend time together in different ways based on their habits, needs, and abilities. Family time is not a single type of experience but a shared experience that creates memories and results in positive feelings of togetherness. It can be scheduled or it can be spontaneous. What matters is that family members willingly share time together.

A commitment to family time and communication sends the message that building family relationships will be a priority in the family. Thinking consciously about how family time is shared and setting goals to create positive experiences together can help families develop close and lasting personal relationships.

If you would like assistance with a family relationship issue, please contact Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 424-7948 or 1-800-777-5888.

KIM PURCELL, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION,
EAP COORDINATOR

Gardening Safety

AUTUMN IS AN ACTIVE TIME FOR GARDENERS

with leaves to rake, bushes to prune and bulbs to be planted. It's a great way to increase your physical activity and spend quality time with your family. A little common sense and some gardening knowledge will go a long way to ensure your gardening pursuits are safe.

Before you head outdoors, ensure you've dressed appropriately. Wear **sensible anti-slip shoes** with closed toes and heels. Be sure to **apply sunscreen**, and consider donning a **wide brimmed hat** to protect your skin and eyes from the sun. Sun or **safety glasses** are also a good idea. **Gloves** will help protect your hands from blisters, cuts and scrapes, and make clean up easier.

If you use a ladder to work on hanging plants, trees or tall shrubs, ensure you have someone hold the ladder stable for you. Using a **long-handled lopper on a pole** from the ground is a great alternative for trimming chores.

Since dust is a general irritant it is best to work with organic materials outside. Consider using a **mask**, particularly when handling soil that may contain fungal spores and bacteria that could become airborne and inhaled. The bacteria that cause tetanus and Legionnaire's disease are both found in soil, so bandaging cuts and avoiding inhaling dust are important.

Some gardens may be home to **poisonous plants**. As a general rule, consider any plant that produces white, milky sap as being potentially toxic or irritating. Be sure to protect your skin and your eyes when working around them. If you get sap on your gloves, take them off before you scratch your nose or wipe the sweat off your face.

If you use **chemical weed and pest control products**, be sure to read the labels very carefully and follow all safety precautions. When pouring pesticides into a sprayer and when spraying, make sure to protect your eyes and skin. Note that these chemicals are banned in some municipalities. Always label containers, even if they are harmless, and keep them out of reach of children and pets.

Natural products are often safer, but some can be harmful. Pyrethrum, for example, comes from the chrysanthemum family and is a natural insecticide but is quite poisonous until it breaks down. Chili and garlic sprays control aphids but can be painful if they get in your eyes.

These are but a few of the gardening safety issues to consider. Remember to be cautious and use common sense when working in your garden paradise.

DEBBIE MACDONALD, HOUSING AUTHORITY SERVICES GROUP,
OH&S CONSULTANT



H1N1 Q&A

What are seasonal influenza and H1N1?

Both seasonal influenza and H1N1 are acute viral illnesses of the respiratory tract. There are various strains of influenza; H1N1 is a new type.

What are the symptoms of seasonal influenza and H1N1?

Seasonal influenza and H1N1 share the same set of symptoms. They are fever and/or cough, and one or more of the following:

- Unusual tiredness,
- Headache,
- Muscle or joint aches,
- Sore throat,
- Vomiting and diarrhea in children less than 5 years of age.

How are seasonal influenza and H1N1 spread?

Coughs and sneezes release germs into the air where they can be breathed in by others. Germs can also rest on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs, where they can be picked up on hands and transferred to the lungs when someone touches their mouth and/or nose.

How can I prevent the spread of seasonal influenza and H1N1?

- Wash your hands with soap and water, or use 60-90% alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available;
- Cough and sneeze into your arm or sleeve. Tissues can be used to cover coughs and sneezes but be sure to wash your hands after throwing out the tissue;
- Do not share drinking glasses, water bottles, mouth guards, cosmetics or eating utensils.

If I am feeling sick, what should I do?

If you are sick, stay home from work, school or social settings. Avoid close contact with others until you are feeling well and able to resume normal day-to-day activities.

What is the treatment for seasonal influenza and H1N1?

Because seasonal and H1N1 (human swine influenza) are caused by a virus, antibiotics are not effective. Antiviral medications can sometimes help lessen influenza symptoms, but they require a prescription.

For a complete list of Q&As and to receive more information on H1N1, please visit the Department of Health Promotion & Protection's website at www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/cdpc/h1n1-influenza.asp.

For further information and advice, contact **HealthLink 811**. Like any illness, should symptoms worsen, visit a doctor or walk-in clinic.

Provincial Public Service Week

WORKING FROM ONE END of the province to the other, more than 11,000 public servants deliver high-quality services and programs to Nova Scotia's families, businesses and communities every day.

Provincial Public Service Week (October 5-11) is an opportunity to recognize the contributions and commitments of our professional and skilled public servants.

Nova Scotia's public servants should be proud of the work they are doing because it touches the lives of every Nova Scotian.

Provincial Public Service Week is only one way we recognize the contributions of employees.

Earlier this year, two teams and three individuals were recognized for their exceptional on-the-job contributions at the 2009 Premier's Award of Excellence event.



PREMIER'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Once again, it's time to nominate an individual or team for the 2010 Premier's Award of Excellence. The deadline for nominations is December 9. An external selection panel will evaluate all nominations and award recipients will be announced at a ceremony in June 2010.

To learn more about our corporate recognition programs visit www.gov.ns.ca/psc/recognition or contact Maria Tendencia at 424-4459, tendenmr@gov.ns.ca.

Success Stories in Wellness

The A, B, See, Diet

HAVE YOU EVER LACKED THE COMMITMENT to slim down to a desired weight? Watched your girth grow while carrying on the same lazy path that built it up in the first place?

I did. I turned 30 this year.

My wife and I also welcomed our first child in December. It'd been a momentous year, full of many changes and I wanted to take the opportunity to improve my overall health. I want my daughter to remember me in good form and be healthy enough to enjoy our future.

In the past I've been prone though, to picking up a healthy habit and dropping it before it ever became routine. I needed some motivation—a cause.

I was able to make the connection when I discovered a blog written by someone in Chicago with the same goal: to lose weight; and the same degenerative eye condition I inherited: choroideremia.

Choroideremia (CHM) is a genetic eye condition that manifests itself first as night blindness and a depleted visual field, gradually eroding the choroid (which delivers nutrients to the retina), starving the retina, weakening it, resulting in eventual blindness. The degeneration varies and those that know me know that I still get around fairly well under most circumstances. However, the little vision that I'm left with is still diminishing, so a cure would be great—if only to stay off the disease for future generations of my family.

So, I set out to raise money to fund research into a cure for choroideremia by losing weight and collecting pledges. (This was the formula used by EJ Scott, the Chicagoan-



Jeff Overmars and daughter, Libby.

blogger and fellow CHM'er).

Beginning in early August I started collecting \$/lb pledges from family, friends and colleagues, created a blog and a Facebook group. So far I've accumulated \$44.83/lb in pledges. I've shed 15 lbs by following a healthy eating plan laid out in *The Ultimate Healthy Eating Guide (That Still Leaves Room for Chocolate)* and adopted the elliptical machine in place of primetime.

Previously, I might have fallen off this regime, but having a team of supporters and a cause has kept me motivated. In all, I'm hoping to lose 30 lbs by December 21. At that time I will notify each pledger and give them instructions on how to donate directly to the Choroideremia Research Foundation Canada Inc. All donations will garner the giver a tax receipt.

For more information visit my blog at

www.losingweightforchm.blogspot.com

or search "Losing Weight for Choroideremia"

on Facebook. Learn more about choroideremia at

www.choroideremia.ca.

To see why we think Jeff is going to succeed in his

journey, read Leslie Beck's book review on The

Ultimate Healthy Eating Guide by visiting

www.lesliebeck.com/book_detail.php?id=48&area=5.

JEFF OVERMARS, COMMUNICATIONS NOVA SCOTIA,
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Family Caregiving & the Workplace

Upcoming Course Dates:

Truro: October 21-22, 2009

Halifax: December 1-2, 2009

New!

Workplace Wellness & Family Caregiving

1-day Course:

Sydney: November 17, 2009

Antigonish: November 19, 2009

To register visit

<http://learnnet.gov.ns.ca>,

or contact registrartraining@gov.ns.ca.

"This course is a very necessary and timely one: in fact, when I was initially approved for the course, my boss expressed surprise that such a useful course was offered. He said, "You know, this is really a good idea. It's perfect." He meant it was perfect for all his employees—we all have loved ones we care for and in today's workplace, it is the enlightened employer who recognizes that the employee has a life outside the 9 to 5 shift; and that this life impacts the performance of the employee, either positively or negatively. It is in the employer's best interest to see that the employee has all the necessary tools for balancing the work and the private life."

Gloria Beaton, Senior Procurement Technician,
Department of Community Services