



NEWS RELEASE

New initiative launches to improve men's health in the workplace in Northern BC

October 6, 2014 (Prince George, BC): A new initiative has launched in Northern BC to address health challenges currently faced by men in the region. The program, POWERPLAY, is a workplace wellness-based initiative that will focus on improving healthy eating and active living among men.

According to a report published by Northern Health in 2011, *Where are the men?*, men die an average of five years earlier than women, of almost all causes, both in BC and most of the developed world. In Northern BC, the situation for men is even more critical as northern men do not live as long as men in the Lower Mainland of the province.

"We have been working on addressing the health needs identified by northern men and recognize that an effective way to do this is to go where they are," explains Holly Christian, Regional Lead for Men's Health, Northern Health. "Providing men with practical information and peer support in their workplaces can help men make positive lifestyle changes to improve their health and avoid illness."

POWERPLAY has been developed through the combined efforts of the BC and Yukon Division of the Canadian Cancer Society, the BC Cancer Agency and Northern Health. These three partners, along with researchers from the University of British Columbia and Athabasca University have combined their resources and expertise as part of a Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute grant for harmonization activities.

"The POWERPLAY team has developed resources following an extensive research phase and through consultations with northern men," says Dr Joan Bottorff, primary investigator for the Harmonization Research Project. "We know men often feel more comfortable in their workplaces than in a clinical setting and that health promotion programs need to be designed for men from the ground up."

Using men-friendly approaches, POWERPLAY is a novel workplace wellness program specifically designed for men. The name of the program, POWERPLAY, has a hockey connection that most men will recognize, and is associated with strength and fun.

Four male-dominated businesses in Northern BC have stepped up to participate in the project: Excel Transportation and Lomak Bulk Carriers based in Prince George, Ridley Terminals in Prince Rupert and the City of Terrace.

"Inactivity and a poor diet are two of the five primary lifestyle risk factors for cancer," says Sonia Lamont, Provincial Director of Prevention Programs, BC Cancer Agency. "In a region where men are known to work hard and play hard we are thrilled to see these employers team up to offer





POWERPLAY, which supports employee health by encouraging physical activity and healthy eating. To make a lifestyle change it needs to be easy and accessible. Workplace support can make a significant impact on a person's overall health."

POWERPLAY is being launched through kick-off events at all four workplaces during the last week of September and first week of October. Employees will meet with representatives from the research program and have an opportunity to participate in two challenges, one focused on healthy eating and the other focused on active living. Participants will receive a 'PLAYBOOK' to track activities and opportunities for friendly competition will be provided.

"We anticipate a friendly rivalry will further engage participants at all of the businesses but particularly Excel and Lomak," says Margaret Jones-Bricker, Northern Region Director, Canadian Cancer Society. "Everyone is keen to start the challenges and we are equally keen to start bringing this program to northern men and making a positive impact on their health."

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