

For immediate release:
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MEDIA RELEASE:

The High Costs of Ignoring Mental Health Issues in the Workplace

November 7, 2008 – Every year, mental health disorders cost Canadian companies a whopping \$16 billion. Each day 500,000 employees miss work due to mental health challenges. On the morning of Wednesday, November 12th (8:30 am – 12 noon), at the Holiday Inn Waterfront, Peterborough, 100 representatives from local workplaces will gather to hear two of Canada's top experts speak on the responsibility and action that can be taken to identify and support employees dealing with mental health issues in the workplace.

Headlining speaker at Health for Life's 2008 Workplace Wellness Symposium ***Mental Health, Addiction and the Workplace: A Business Perspective, A Business Responsibility*** is Bill Wilkerson, founder and CEO of the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health.

Wilkerson, an internationally-recognized expert is known for putting mental health on the agenda of corporate Canada. His impact as an advocate is due to his experience. Wilkerson's career, one spent predominantly in senior executive roles, spans many sectors – business, broadcasting, government, and the professional sports. He speaks the language of business; he has lived the business perspective.

Many employers are unaware of the seriousness of the issue, how it affects their bottom line and what their role is. At the Health for Life Workplace Wellness Symposium, Wilkerson will make this clear; the issue is steadily increasing and its affecting the bottom line (see attached factsheet: *Why Mental Health in the Workplace Matters*). "We can't afford to be tossing workers overboard", he says.

Understanding the issue is one thing; knowing what to do about it another. Following Wilkerson's presentation will be another award-winning presentation with Donna Hardaker of Mental Health Works. Hardaker will focus on strategies and approaches that allow frontline managers, human resource personnel, union reps and occupational health professionals to improve their communication and effectiveness in dealing with complex and often emotionally-charged situations when an employee is dealing with a mental health issue.

"We are very lucky to have Bill and Donna join us for the morning. Their breadth of knowledge in this area is exceptional and they are in very high demand", says Jackie Donaldson, Health for Life committee member. "Bill's reputation as both an expert and a speaker, precedes him. Many of our symposium attendees signed up as soon as they heard a whisper of his coming to Peterborough."

The symposium would not have been possible without the generous contributions of: Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health, Mental Health Works, Great West Life, GWL Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace and the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Local partners of Health for Life's 2008 Workplace Wellness Symposium are: Health for Life, Peterborough County-City Health Unit and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

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For more information:
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Please note: Bill Wilkerson and Donna Hardaker may be available prior to the event for an in-depth interview. Please contact Jackie Donaldson for more information: 743-1003, x306



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