

# For Your **BENEFIT**



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## September 29th - October 29th is Healthy Workplace Month!

Canada's Healthy Workplace Week is now officially becoming one month! Organizations now have one month to take advantage of the national workplace health promotion campaign for the whole month. Healthy Workplace month is an opportunity for employers to educate their employees about health and wellness through such events as onsite health fairs and workshops.

This campaign has been in force since 2001 and every year an increasing number of employers across Canada are participating in Healthy Workplace Week. This campaign has been extended to one month in hopes of raising awareness about the importance of employee health to business success. Check out the website, [www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca](http://www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca) today to see how you can take part of this year's campaign. You can also find different activities, surveys and much more. This year you can also take part in an all Canada Challenge to see who has the healthiest workplace around. This year's focus is as follows:

**Week 1- Fit @ Work**  
Size up your organization's fitness, health and well-being opportunities!

**Week 2 - Support @ Work**  
Assess your workplace culture!

**Week 3 - Green @ Work**  
Find out how environmentally friendly your organization is!

**Week 4 - Champions @ Work**  
How you can keep it going all year round!



## Is Stress a Problem in your Workplace?

**What is Stress?** Stress is the body's psychological response to an external stimulus. This stimulus can be a change or an incident that requires adaptation. They can be both pleasant or unpleasant. The perception of, reaction to and general attitude to stressors decide whether or not the stress will be harmful.

**Where does Stress come from?** Stress can come from common workplace issues:

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1-Job Security          | 5-Responsibility Overload              |
| 2-Work Overload         | 6-Technology Changes                   |
| 3-Limited Flexibility   | 7-Lack of Training During Role Changes |
| 4-Personality Conflicts |  |

**How can you ensure your workplace is healthy for your employees?** As mental health issues are the cause if unproductively - personally and professionally, take advantage of Healthy Workplace Month and ensure that your workplace is psychologically healthy. You should ensure to include the following:

- High-quality, flexible benefit plans
- Ongoing programs to monitor and evaluate job satisfaction
- Training programs and leadership preparation
- Fair and honest employee treatment and performance review systems focused on feedback and performance enhancement
- Easy access to mental health, substance abuse and Employee Assistance Programs
- Recognition for individual and team performance

Many of these recommendations can be completed on a regular basis and go such a long way in providing employees with value, challenge, flexibility and belonging.

**1 in 5 Canadians will personally experience mental illness**

**3 in 5 people with mental illness or addictions go without treatment**

Source: Centre for Addictions and Mental Health. Annual Report 2006-2007

## Recent Stats from the Employee Benefit Research Institute

41% of workers think they need to accumulate at least \$500,000 by the time they retire to live comfortably in retirement

16% feel they need between \$250,000 and \$499,999

26% think they will need to save less than \$250,000 for a comfortable retirement

And a very scary number 49% of workers who reported saving for retirement said they now have less than \$25,000 in total savings and investments (excluding the value of their home and Defined Benefit plans).

**A Reason to stay in touch with plan members** - especially as they get closer to retirement:

The interval between when workers first begin thinking seriously about retirement and actual retirement is typically fairly short, says a survey of recent retirees by the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI). It found that two years or less elapse between the start of serious consideration and follow-through. Twenty-two per cent reported they first began thinking seriously about retiring only six months before they left the company, while another 22% began serious consideration about one year beforehand. Only 28% gave their decision serious consideration for more than two years. Retirees likely to say they gave only about six months of serious consideration to their decision are those who were not at all satisfied with their job. On the other hand, retirees who retired before age 58 or who left due to their own health are more likely to have considered their decision for at least five years.

## Important Information about Pension Contributions

When a plan member is absent from work as the result of a workplace injury, the employer must continue making contributions to the pension plan during the first year of the absence, unless the plan is contributory and the member declines to pay his or her contributions during the absence in writing. (Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997)

When a plan member is on parental or pregnancy leave, family medical leave, or emergency leave, as defined by the Employee Standards Act (ESA), they continue to participate in pension plan unless they:

1– elect in writing not to do so; or

2– the plan is contributory and the member declines to pay his or her contributions during the leave period.

The ESA also requires an employer to continue making contributions to a pension plan on behalf of a member during the statutory termination notice period. (Employment Standards Act, 2000)

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Mark Stonefish, Employee Benefits and Pension Consultant at Soulliere Financial Group in Windsor, Ontario has been designated a **Certified Employee Benefit Specialist (CEBS)** by the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans and Dalhousie University.

The **Certified Employee Benefit Specialist** designation represents a high level of academic and professional achievement in the employee benefits sector. It is awarded to candidates who successfully complete the ten prescribed examinations and who meet the Pre-Certification standards and agree to abide by the Principles of Conduct.



*The information contained in this newsletter provides general information and is not intended to be comprehensive investment, medical, financial or legal advice to any individual or business. We strongly recommend that any queries be directed to an appropriate professional advisor. If you have any questions or issues that have risen from reading this material, please call our office. We would be pleased to assist you.*