



## NIDMAR sets sights on degree-granting school



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*Advanced Education Minister Ida Chong (left), NIDMAR executive director Wolfgang Zimmermann, and Alberni-Qualicum MLA Gillian Trumper apply their signatures to the groundbreaking memorandum of understanding that will result in establishing a global centre of excellence and world-class degree-granting educational institution focused on occupational health and safety, disability management and rehabilitation. The new institution will be supported through leading employer and worker organizations from across Canada and around the world.*

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**Vancouver, BC:** The world's first special purpose degree-granting institution dedicated to occupational health and safety, disability management and rehabilitation education will be located on Vancouver Island. The institute will also serve as a global research centre of excellence in the occupational health and safety, disability management, and rehabilitation fields.

The first step towards establishing the institution was taken on April 15, when NIDMAR and the provincial government signed a memorandum of understanding.

"We will support the institution by providing technical assistance in establishing it as a private degree-granting institution in the province of British Columbia, subject to the requirements of the *Degree Authorization Act*," said Advanced Education Minister Ida Chong.

While this marks a first step, NIDMAR's vision for the institution's future is grand and global. "We appreciate the provincial government's support for our endeavour, which we hope will ultimately become a world-class university focused on key priorities in disability management as well as health and safety and rehabilitation," said Mike Rushby, NIDMAR employer co-chair and vice president of human resources at Weyerhaeuser Company.

"Experience from successful consensus-based disability management programs around the world clearly shows that a well developed joint health and safety program is essential to success," said Brian Payne, NIDMAR labour co-chair and president of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada.

"This critical linkage is recognized both in the Occupational Standards in Disability Management and the International Labour Organization's (ILO) *Code of practice on managing disability in the workplace*. In my view, combining health and safety, disability management and rehabilitation education under one dedicated educational umbrella holds much potential for better outcomes for disabled workers and people with disabilities generally," Payne added.

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*One of NIDMAR's founding directors, Henry Nedergard, acting on behalf of the NIDMAR board of directors, adds his signature to the MOU document at a special reception hosted by Mayor Ken McRae. From left: Gillian Trumper, Alberni-Qualicum MLA; Ken McRae, Mayor of Port Alberni; Henry Nedergard, NIDMAR founding director; Wolfgang Zimmermann, NIDMAR executive director.*

The signing of the agreement followed months of negotiations with government. Initial support for the proposal came from key businesses, labour and government leaders across Canada and around the world.

The formal announcement took place during a reception hosted by Ken McRae, Mayor of Port Alberni, where the seeds of NIDMAR sprouted just over 10 years ago.

"This educational institution should have been here 10 years ago," says Mayor McRae, who is also former president of the Port Alberni and District Labour Council. "When you think about industrial accidents, they're really the worst kind. I was a millwright, and my father was a faller back in the days of springboards. They saw some horrible accidents, and the majority could have been prevented."

"This educational institution is most important if you look at the injuries in the workplace today," said Henry Nedergard, former health and safety director of IWA Local 1-85, and a founding director of NIDMAR.

"We are a small local union of IWA and we're still killing people today as we did 50 years ago, so I think it's very important that we have standards and training in health and safety, as well as in disability management," he added.

The reality of industrial accidents can be seen all too clearly in the numbers. Since 1953, there were 166 fatalities in this one local alone (IWA Local 1-85). We can only guess the impact those losses caused for wives, children, friends and co-workers.

While the world is still faced with workplace injuries and companies that need to do a better job of accommodating injured workers, there has been much progress made in the last decade.

"NIDMAR has been doing research for 10 years and is very successful on the international scene," said Nedergard. "The curriculum is there and it's solid. This university will take it one step further."

The new institution is expected to be operational in about two years. After its launch, it will work with the biennial International Forum on Disability Management, a global project supported by the International Labour Organization. ■