

REMARKS BY
HONOURABLE MICHAEL WILSON
PRESIDENT AND CEO, RT CAPITAL MANAGEMENT INC.
AND
HONORARY CHAIRMAN, BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE ON
ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH
TO
CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA
2001 WELLNESS CONFERENCE CEO BREAKFAST

MENTAL HEALTH: BUSINESS IN THE NEW ECONOMY

DELTA CHELSEA HOTEL, TORONTO

7:30 A.M., MARCH 7, 2001

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

REMARKS BY
HONOURABLE MICHAEL WILSON
PRESIDENT AND CEO, RT CAPITAL
AND
HONORARY CHAIRMAN, BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE ON
ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH
TO
CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA
CEO BREAKFAST
DELTA CHELSEA HOTEL, TORONTO
7:30 A.M., MARCH 7, 2001

GOOD MORNING, I AM PLEASED TO BE HERE AND WISH TO CONGRATULATE THE CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA FOR USING THIS EVENT TO PLACE HEALTH ISSUES “FRONT AND CENTER” BEFORE A BUSINESS AUDIENCE.

FURTHER, THE BOARD’S RECENT LAUNCH OF ITS LEADERS ROUNDTABLE ON HEALTH AND WELLNESS IS A CONSTRUCTIVE AND TIMELY INITIATIVE. I CONGRATULATE YOU ON THAT AS WELL.

FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS OR SO, I HAVE SERVED AS HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF THE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE ON ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH.

THE ROUNDTABLE'S MISSION IS TO DOCUMENT THE EFFECTS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION ISSUES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF BUSINESS – IN FINANCIAL AND COMPETITIVE TERMS – AND TO RECOMMEND PRACTICAL MEASURES BUSINESS CAN TAKE IN RESPONSE TO THEM.

THE ROUNDTABLE CARRIES OUT ITS MISSION THROUGH VOLUNTEER EFFORTS WITH SOME FUNDING FROM VALUED AFFILIATIONS IN THE BUSINESS AND HEALTH SECTORS, FOR SERVICES RENDERED AND THROUGH MODEST SUBSCRIPTIONS TO OUR REPORTS WHICH COME OUT FROM TIME TO TIME.

SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1998, THE ROUNDTABLE HAS DEPENDED ON THE HIGHLY-PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT OF A NUMBER OF SENIOR BUSINESS, HEALTH AND EDUCATION LEADERS. WE ARE NOT A VOICE **FOR** BUSINESS, WE ARE A VOICE AND CHANNEL **TO** BUSINESS.

I AM DELIGHTED TO REPORT THAT SEVERAL OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT ADVOCATES ARE WITH ME THIS MORNING AND I WANT TO INTRODUCE THEM TO YOU.

TIM PRICE IS CO-FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE ON ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH. HE IS ALSO CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF TRILON FINANCIAL CORPORATION AND A SENIOR PARTNER AT BRASCAN.

MARIA GONZALEZ IS THE VICE PRESIDENT OF STRATEGIC ALLIANCES FOR THE BANK OF MONTREAL, AN EXPERT IN ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH, A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE ROUNDTABLE AND OUR VICE-CHAIR.

NANCY HUGHES-ANTHONY IS PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND A FORMER COLLEAGUE OF MINE IN GOVERNMENT WHERE SHE WAS A DEPUTY MINISTER.

THE CHAMBER RECENTLY JOINED THE ROUNDTABLE AND ITS NETWORK OF MEMBERS AND FRIENDS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE CANADA WILL GIVE THE ROUNDTABLE A BUILT-IN MARKET FOR OUR INFORMATION PRODUCTS AND ACCESS TO LARGER AND SMALLER EMPLOYERS ALIKE.

DARWIN KEALEY REPRESENTS THE ROUNDTABLE'S FIRST AND VALUED BUSINESS AFFILIATE, GPC INTERNATIONAL WHERE HE IS CHAIRMAN. GPC HOUSES THE ROUNDTABLE, SUPPORTS US FINANCIALLY AND HAS OPENED ITS INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS TO US. WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL.

PETER COLERIDGE, VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY HEALTH, IS WITH US REPRESENTING THE CENTRE FOR ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH, ONE OF CANADA'S PRE-EMINENT PSYCHIATRY AND ADDICTION TREATMENT, RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ORGANIZATION AND A WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE.

ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO, THE ROUNDTABLE COMPLETED A FORMAL AFFILIATION AGREEMENT WITH THE CENTRE AND WE ARE VERY PROUD OF THAT. THE RELATIONSHIP BRINGS BUSINESS PEOPLE AND CLINICIANS TOGETHER TO WORK ON THE CROSSOVER EFFECTS AMONG MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTIONS, WORK AND THE ECONOMY.

I AM PLEASED TO WELCOME MAUREEN SHAW, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT PREVENTION ASSOCIATION. SHE JOINS THE ROUNDTABLE TO COMBAT THE EMOTIONAL HAZARDS OF THE MODERN WORKPLACE.

OUR TABLE THIS MORNING IS GRACED BY ONE OTHER GUEST – MR. JUSTICE PAUL BENTLEY OF THE ONTARIO COURT OF JUSTICE. JUDGE BENTLEY IS WITH US FOR A VERY PARTICULAR REASON THIS MORNING.

TWO YEARS AGO, HE FOUNDED THE TORONTO DRUG TREATMENT COURT, A PILOT PROJECT, THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN CANADA, AIMED AT BREAKING THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF CRIME AND PUNISHMENT AMONG DRUG ADDICTS WHO COMMIT NON-VIOLENT OFFENSES TO FEED THEIR DESTRUCTIVE HABIT.

THE ROUNDTABLE ENDORSES THIS REMARKABLE PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVE. IT IS BEING CARRIED OUT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CENTRE FOR ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH AND YOU WILL BE HEARING MORE FROM US ON THIS SUBJECT IN THE DAYS AHEAD.

I MIGHT ALSO NOTE THAT AT NINE O-CLOCK THIS MORNING, THE ROUNDTABLE'S CO- FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, BILL WILKERSON, WILL KICK-OFF THIS CONFERENCE AND FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO CAN STAY ON, I WOULD CERTAINLY ENCOURAGE YOU TO DO SO.

SO MUCH FOR MY INTRODUCTIONS. BUT IT HELPS YOU GET A SENSE OF THE ROUNDTABLE'S ACTIVITIES.

RECENTLY, THE NEW YORK TIMES PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE THAT SAID THE EFFECTS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR ON ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IS SOMETHING WE SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO. WELL, AT THE ROUNDTABLE, WE ALREADY ARE.

IN FACT, WE ARE CALLING THE GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY – THE ECONOMY OF MENTAL HEALTH.

THE REASON IS THIS.

LIKE NEVER BEFORE, BUSINESS TODAY DEPENDS UPON THE CONSISTENT, SUSTAINABLE MENTAL PERFORMANCE OF EMPLOYEES, MANAGERS AND EXECUTIVES FOR FUNDAMENTAL COMPETITIVE REASONS.

TAKE INNOVATION. THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT INNOVATION TODAY IS A KEY DETERMINANT OF CORPORATE SUCCESS. IT IS A DIFFERENTIATOR. A COMPETITIVE EDGE. IT IS ALSO A MENTAL FUNCTION.

IN AN ECONOMY WHERE INNOVATION CAN PROTECT OR EXPAND MARKET SHARE, WHERE THE “THOUGHT CONTENT” OF PRODUCTS CAN HAVE GREATER COMPETITIVE VALUE IN OUR MARKET ECONOMY THAN THE PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF STEEL, ALUMINUM, OIL OR PLASTIC, THEN IT’S TIME TO RECOGNIZE THE STRATEGIC INTEREST WHICH BUSINESS HAS IN MENTAL HEALTH.

FOR THIS REASON: MENTAL HEALTH IS THE COLLATERAL WHICH ANCHORS THIS PRIME SOURCE OF THAT VALUE-ADDED – THE CAPACITY OF EMPLOYEES, MANAGERS AND EXECUTIVES TO THINK, USE IDEAS, BE CREATIVE AND BE PRODUCTIVE WHILE MINING AND APPLYING INFORMATION AS A COMMODITY IN ITS OWN RIGHT.

IN SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT, OUR *MINDS* NOT OUR BACKS, ARMS AND LEGS WILL DO THE HEAVY LIFTING OF BUSINESS.

IN THE WAR FOR 21ST CENTURY EMPLOYEE TALENT – MINDSETS AND NOT JUST SKILLSETS WILL CARRY A VERY HIGH PREMIUM IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION.

CONSIDER THE STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEPLOYMENT OF HUMAN MENTAL AGILITY TO BASIC QUESTIONS OF PRODUCTION AND COST.

TODAY, IT TAKES ABOUT 45 MINUTES TO PRODUCE A TON OF STEEL. IT USED TO TAKE SEVERAL HOURS. THE DIFFERENCE? HUMAN INNOVATION FACILITATED BY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

A GENERAL MOTORS CAR TODAY COMES OFF THE ASSEMBLY LINE WITH MORE MICROCHIPS THAN SPARKPLUGS. ITS COMMERCIAL VALUE COMPARED TO THAT OF THE COMPETITION IS DEFINED MOSTLY BY THE INJECTION OF HUMAN INNOVATION INTO ITS SAFETY AND DESIGN FEATURES.

CORPORATIONS WORLDWIDE TODAY SPEND MORE MONEY EACH YEAR ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS – THE VEINS OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION – THAN THEY DO ON OIL, THE BLOOD OF MACHINES.

THE SOFTWARE REVOLUTION HAS SPAWNED THE ECONOMY OF MENTAL INGENUITY.

AND FROM THAT HAS COME THE MIRACLE OF MASS CUSTOMIZATION.

COMPUTERS ARE NO LONGER BUILT JUST TO DO BIG CALCULATIONS – FAST. THEY ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE GOOD IDEAS AND ADAPT PRODUCTS CUSTOMER-BY-CUSTOMER – IN ALMOST EVERY FIELD.

THEY ARE USED BY INDIVIDUALS AT EVERY LEVEL OF THE ORGANIZATION AS THE ARTIST USES A BRUSH.

IN BUSINESS TODAY, THE WAY PEOPLE THINK *IS IN*. COMPANIES NO LONGER CONSIST OF THINKERS IN ONE ROOM OR PAY SCALE AND DOERS IN ANOTHER. TODAY, THINKERS AND DOERS MUST LIVE IN ONE PERSON.

IN BUSINESS TODAY, THE WAY PEOPLE RELATE TO EACH OTHER IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HOW MACHINES RELATE TO EACH OTHER. THIS IS A VIVID DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE INDUSTRIAL AGE AND THE INFORMATION AGE. AND QUITE REMARKABLE THAT IT EVEN DESERVES MENTIONING.

HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND MENTAL HEALTH ARE THE SPINAL CHORD OF THE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY. THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE BROACHES THAT VERY POINT.

WHAT IS THE NASDAQ BUT A SCORECARD OF INVESTMENTS IN IDEAS AND VISIONS AND WHAT PEOPLE SEE AHEAD?

AND IF YOU WANT A DEFINITION OF MENTAL HEALTH, YOU DON'T NEED TO LOOK IN A MEDICAL BOOK. JUST TAKE A LOOK AT THE RECRUITMENT ADS APPEARING IN THE PAPER EVERY DAY.

YOU WILL SEE A DEFINITION OF MENTAL HEALTH WHICH I THINK EVEN MOST CLINICIANS WOULD BE FAIRLY COMFORTABLE WITH – IT IS THE SPRINGBOARD OF HOW WE THINK, COMMUNICATE, LEARN AND GROW, THE RESILIENCE WE HAVE AND SELF-ESTEEM WE ENJOY.

THESE ARE THE QUALITIES EMPLOYERS ARE SEEKING IN THE PEOPLE THEY RECRUIT. AND THERE IS NO DISTINCTION HERE BETWEEN THE OLD ECONOMY AND THE NEW ECONOMY. THE POWER OF A HEALTHY MIND IS ESSENTIAL TO BOTH.

MENTAL HEALTH IS THE ABILITY TO MEET OUR OBLIGATIONS AND CHALLENGES, ADEPT TO CHANGE AND ADVERSITY, SHARE NOT HOARD, GIVE CREDIT NOT BLAME, RELATE WELL TO OTHERS, LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

EMPLOYERS NEED THESE QUALITIES OF MIND AND EXPERIENCE IN PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY IMPLY THAT THE INDIVIDUAL WILL DO A GOOD JOB CONSISTENTLY AND ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES WHEN THINGS GO WRONG.

MENTAL HEALTH IS ALL THOSE THINGS. AND IN THE KIND OF GLOBAL, KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY WE ARE LIVING IN TODAY, IT IS ALSO THE ULTIMATE PRODUCTIVITY WEAPON.

AND IF THIS HELPS MAKE THE BUSINESS CASE FOR MENTAL HEALTH, IT ALSO MAKES THE CASE FOR REDUCING STRESS AT WORK, DISTRIBUTING WORK FAIRLY, INVESTING IN WORKING CONDITIONS WHICH PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH, REFORMING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES WHICH CAN CONTRIBUTE TO MENTAL DISTRESS – ALL OF THIS FOR SOUND, MEASURABLE BUSINESS REASONS AND NOTHING LESS.

LET ME UNDERSCORE THAT POINT. STRESS AND MANAGEMENT PRACTISES WHICH INCREASE STRESS DON'T ALONE CAUSE MENTAL ILLNESS, BUT THEY ARE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS.

THESE ARE THE REASONS THE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE ON ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH WAS FORMED. BUT NOT THE ONLY REASON. THERE IS ANOTHER, MORE OMINOUS ONE.

AS MENTAL HEALTH BEGINS TO ASSUME CORPORATE ASSET VALUE IN ITS OWN RIGHT, THE WORLD AND CANADA ARE AWAKENING TO A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS OF LARGE PROPORTIONS. HARVARD UNIVERSITY AND

THE WORLD BANK CALL IT AN “UNHERALDED CRISIS” – UNFOLDING BUT LARGELY UNNOTICED.

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE BURNING LIKE WILDFIRE AROUND THE WORLD AND AFFLICTING A GLOBAL POPULATION GREATER THAN THE SIZE OF EUROPE. THIS PANDEMIC IS DISABLING MORE PEOPLE THAN AIDS, CANCER AND TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS COMBINED.

DEPRESSION IS THE LEADING SOURCE OF DISABILITY IN CANADA AND THE WORLD. IN NAFTA, MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS COST \$80 BILLION (US) A YEAR – TWO-THIRDS OF THAT IN THE FORM OF LOST AND DIMINISHED INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTIVITY.

IN THIS GARISH LIGHT, LET NO ONE ARGUE THAT MENTAL HEALTH IS ***NOT*** A BUSINESS ISSUE.

THE ROUNDTABLE ESTIMATES THAT MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS COST CANADIAN BUSINESS ABOUT \$16 BILLION A YEAR. THIS IS EQUIVALENT TO NEARLY 14 PER CENT OF THE NET ANNUAL OPERATING PROFITS OF ALL BUSINESSES IN CANADA COMBINED.

MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS REPRESENT EIGHT PER CENT OF THE GLOBAL BURDEN OF DISEASE – THE LARGEST CATEGORY EXCEPT FOR ONLY TWO OTHERS – RESPIRATORY AND PERI-NATAL CONDITIONS.

IN PLAIN BUSINESS TERMS, DESPAIR – WHICH *IS* DEPRESSION – COSTS BUSINESS MORE MONEY YEAR-IN AND YEAR-OUT THAN STRIKES AND PRODUCT DEFECTS.

IN THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY AND NAFTA COMBINED, DEPRESSION DISORDERS DRAIN \$120 BILLION (US) OUT OF THESE HUGE ECONOMIES EACH AND EVERY YEAR.

WHEN I WAS MINISTER OF FINANCE, I KNEW NONE OF THESE FIGURES. NOR DID MY COLLEAGUES. IF I KNEW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW, MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES WOULD HAVE BEEN CLOSE TO THE TOP OF MY ECONOMIC PRIORITIES THROUGH THE PERIOD I WAS IN GOVERNMENT.

IN ALL OF THIS, WE SEE AN IRONY. DEPRESSION – DESPITE ITS GROWTH – IS TREATABLE AND BEATABLE ABOUT 80 PER CENT OF THE TIME.

AMONG THE THREE MILLION CANADIANS WHO SUFFER DEPRESSION, ONE-FOURTH ARE DIAGNOSED BUT ONLY ONE-FOURTH OF THAT NUMBER

RECEIVE PROPER TREATMENT – ABOUT 6.5 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL NUMBER.

THIS IS AN UGLY STATISTIC THAT AS A COUNTRY THAT PLACES SUCH AN EMPHASIS ON UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE – WE SHOULD BE THOROUGHLY ASHAMED OF. IT CONTRIBUTES SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY WE NOW FACE.

THE DOLLAR COSTS OF MENTAL ILLNESS ARE ONLY ONE PERSPECTIVE. THERE IS ALSO AN ENORMOUS BURDEN OF HUMAN SUFFERING. BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THOSE DOLLAR COSTS ARE BUSINESS-RELATED.

LOST OR DIMINISHED PRODUCTIVITY, WAGE REPLACEMENTS, DISABILITY COSTS, LOST OPPORTUNITY COSTS – THESE ARE THE PRIMARY ECONOMIC EXPRESSIONS OF THIS PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.

SYNCRUDE CANADA HAS DOCUMENTED THE CASE.

CEO ERIC NEWELL TELLS US THAT HIS COMPANY MEASURES PRODUCTIVITY IN THE FORM OF BARRELS OF OIL PRODUCED PER EMPLOYEE.

AND IN LIGHT OF THE KNOWN PREVALENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS, HE CALCULATES A LOSS TO HIS FIRM IN THE ORDER OF 11 MILLION BARRELS OF OIL PRODUCTION A YEAR – AND \$200 MILLION OF ANNUAL REVENUE.

AT THE ROYAL BANK FINANCIAL GROUP, WHERE I WORK, IN THE YEAR PAST, THE LARGEST CATEGORY OF ALL SHORT TERM DISABILITY STANDS FROM MENTAL DISORDERS . THIS IS A BROAD CATEGORY WHICH INCLUDES EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING STRESS, FATIGUE, ANXIETY, ADVERSE PERSONAL SITUATIONS – NOT JUST CLINICAL DISORDERS.

A NEW NORM IN SOURCING DISABILITY HAS SET IN AND THE ROUNDTABLE FORESEES THIS TREND CONTINUING.

DISABILITY INSURANCE AND GROUP HEALTH CLAIMS FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS MAY CLIMB TO MORE THAN 50 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CLAIMS ADMINISTERED THROUGH EMPLOYEE GROUP HEALTH PLANS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

OVER THE NEXT *20 YEARS*, HARVARD AND THE WORLD BANK FORESEE DEPRESSION BECOMING THE LEADING SOURCE OF WORKDAYS LOST THROUGH DISABILITY AND PREMATURE DEATH – AND THIS, I WANT TO EMPHASIZE, REFERS TO THE RICHER, DEVELOPED ECONOMIES SUCH AS CANADA. HEART DISEASE WILL BE NUMBER TWO.

THIS IS THE FACE OF A PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE WHICH CONFRONTS OUR LABOR FORCE, OUR ECONOMY AND OUR CORPORATIONS. TO MEET THIS CHALLENGE, THE ROUNDTABLE BELIEVES WE MUST OPEN A NEW FRONT IN AN OLD WAR. THE WAR AGAINST MENTAL ILLNESS.

THE OLD WAR IS MENTAL ILLNESS. THE NEW FRONT IS OUR PLACES OF BUSINESS AND WORK.

LET ME CLOSE WITH A WORD ON THIS IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENT.

OVER THE NEXT 24 MONTHS, THE ROUNDTABLE WILL LAY OUT A GLOBAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY ON ADDICTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH.

OUR OBJECTIVES WILL BE TO:

- ARM EMPLOYERS, UNIONS AND EMPLOYEES WITH THE MANAGEMENT AND WORK TOOLS TO REDUCE DRAMATICALLY THE EFFECTS OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS ON PRODUCTIVE HUMAN BEHAVIOR AT WORK AND CORPORATE PRODUCTIVITY IN THE MARKET PLACE.
- ARM EMPLOYERS, UNIONS AND EMPLOYEES WITH THE IDEAS, INSIGHTS AND METHODOLOGY TO STOP, THEN REVERSE ESCALATING TRENDS IN MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY.
- CHALLENGE THE WIDER COMMUNITY TO BECOME INFORMED – REALLY INFORMED – TO UNDERSTAND WHAT MENTAL ILLNESS **IS** AND **IS NOT**, THEREBY IMPROVING EARLY DETECTION, DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT.
- AND MOBILIZE THE INTERNET – THE MOST POWERFUL INFORMATION MEDIUM THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN – TO HELP DEFEAT THE STIGMA OF MENTAL ILLNESS ONCE AND FOR ALL.

IN THIS BROAD INITIATIVE, WE MUST STRIVE TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF DEPRESSION AT WORK.

REDUCE THE EVIDENCE OF ANGER, FRUSTRATION AND BURNOUT AT WORK.

WE MUST URGENTLY AND DRAMATICALLY IMPROVE THE RATE OF EARLY DETECTION OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.

LET ME RETURN TO THE EXPERIENCE OF MY OWN EMPLOYER – THE ROYAL BANK FINANCIAL GROUP.

IN 1998, THE ROYAL BANK WAS THE FIRST FINANCIAL INSTITUTION IN CANADA TO FORM AN EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES ADVISORY COUNCIL.

THE COUNCIL INCLUDED 20 EMPLOYEES FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY WHO REPRESENTED A CROSS-SECTION OF DISABILITIES (INCLUDING DEPRESSION) – INDIVIDUALS WHO OCCUPIED POSITIONS AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF THE ORGANIZATION – FROM ENTRY TO VICE-PRESIDENT.

THE PURPOSE WAS TO ADVISE RBC WHAT WORKED WELL AND WHAT DIDN'T WORK WELL IN THE BANK WORKPLACE TO ACCOMMODATE VALUABLE EMPLOYEES WHO SUFFERED A DISABILITY.

ONE OF THE MOST USEFUL INNOVATIONS WAS THE CREATION WITHIN THE BANK OF A CENTRALIZED BUDGET TO FACILITATE THE ACCOMMODATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AT WORK AND OVERCOME, AMONG EXECUTIVES AND MANAGERS DOWN THE LINE, THE PERCEPTION THAT PROVIDING SUCH ACCOMMODATION WAS A HIGH AND BURDENSOME COST FOR INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENTAL BUDGETS TO BEAR.

IN ADDITION, THE BANK ESTABLISHED A CENTRALIZED DATABASE TO ASSIST MANAGERS TO SECURE THE LOCAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS NEEDED TO ASSIST STAFF WITH DISABILITIES.

THE BANK ADOPTED AN ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY POLICY AND MEASURES TO PROMOTE STANDARD OF ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, NOT JUST THOSE RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH.

MEANWHILE, THE BANK'S BUSINESS GROUP IN THE PRAIRIES IS FOCUSING THIS YEAR ON LEARNING ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS, REFERRING PEOPLE TO WEBSITES, HELPING STAFF AND MANAGERS BECOME AWARE OF WHAT SYMPTOMS INDIVIDUALS WITH DEPRESSION MIGHT EXHIBIT AND HOW THEY CAN HELP.

OUR CHAIRMAN AND CEO, JOHN CLEGHORN, DESCRIBES BUSINESS POLICIES OF ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATION FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITY AS MORE THAN A CORPORATE OBLIGATION – IT IS GOOD BUSINESS.

I AGREE WITH THAT, OF COURSE.

BUT IF IT'S GOOD BUSINESS, THE BATTLE AGAINST MENTAL DISABILITY – LIKE OTHER BUSINESS PROPOSITIONS – MUST HAVE AN INVESTMENT DIMENSION AND A MEASURABLE RETURN-ON-INVESTMENT.

THAT BEING SO, AS BUSINESS PEOPLE, WE MUST SET FINANCIAL TARGETS SO WE CAN MEASURE OUR SUCCESS IN THIS REGARD. SUCH TARGETS CAN BE SET AND CAN BE MET.

I CALL ON CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS TO JOIN US IN THIS EFFORT. WE WANT TO CONSULT WIDELY.

I CALL ON GOVERNMENT EMPLOYERS – AND DEPUTY MINISTERS – TO JOIN US IN THIS EFFORT. WE WANT TO CONSULT WIDELY.

I CALL ON THE HEALTH AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES TO JOIN US IN THIS EFFORT. WE WANT TO CONSULT WIDELY WITH CONSUMERS, SURVIVORS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

LAST JULY, THE ROUNDTABLE PUBLISHED A 12-STEP BUSINESS PLAN TO DEFEAT DEPRESSION. THIS REPORT CAN NOW BE FOUND IN HALF A DOZEN COUNTRIES. WE WILL BUILD ON THAT. BILL WILKERSON WILL ELABORATE ON THESE 12-STEPS IN A FEW MINUTES NEXT DOOR.

LAST YEAR, TIM PRICE AND THE ROUNDTABLE RECEIVED THE AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION'S FIRST AWARD RECOGNIZING LEADERSHIP IN THE WAR AGAINST MENTAL ILLNESS AT WORK. WE WILL BUILD ON THAT.

HISTORICALLY, CANADIANS HAVE DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES IN INTERNATIONAL CAUSES – PEACEKEEPING, LAND MINES, PUBLIC HEALTH AND DISEASE ERADICATION.

WE ARE NOW POISED, AS CANADIANS, TO SHOW LEADERSHIP TO GOOD EFFECT ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE BY OPENING THIS NEW FRONT IN THIS OLD WAR.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH IS A GLOBAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC ASSET WHICH IS UNDER SEVERE DURESS. WE CAN BRING RELIEF, EVEN RESOLUTION TO THIS CRISIS IF WE SEE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW ONCE WROTE A LINE SINCE ATTRIBUTED TO THE LATE ROBERT KENNEDY. IT APPLIES HERE.

“SOME PEOPLE SEE THINGS AS THEY ARE AND ASK WHY. I SEE THINGS AS THEY MIGHT BE, AND ASK WHY NOT?”

IF THE QUESTION, LIKE THE SHOE, FITS, LET’S WEAR IT.

- IF WE CAN SEE ONE DAY A WORLD LESS RATTLED BY THE FORCES OF MENTAL ILLNESS, AND MORE PRODUCTIVE BY A GREATER REVALENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH;
- IF WE CAN SEE THAT THE ROOTS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ITS NEMESSES BOTH RUN DEEP IN THE ATTITUDES AND UNDERSTANDING EACH OF US BRINGS TO THE SUBJECT AND CALL IT ENLIGHTENMENT;

➤ AND IF WE CAN COMPREHEND THE PERSONAL, BUSINESS AND
COMMUNITY STAKE EACH OF US HAS IN TAMING THE GREAT
“UNHERALDED CRISIS” IN WORLD MENTAL HEALTH THAT HARVARD
SPEAKS OF;

THEN SURELY WE TOO CAN SEE THINGS AS THEY MIGHT BE – AND ASK
OURSELVES – WHY NOT, FOR GOODNESS SAKE, WHY NOT?

THANK YOU.