

**Speaking Notes – Partners in Protection Welcome (2 mins)**

**[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]**

Good morning everyone. I'm pleased to be here today at the annual Partners in Prevention Conference and Trade Show.

I would like to welcome those who have travelled from afar to attend this week's proceedings, whether as a delegate, presenter, vendor or organizer. I hope you enjoy your stay, and are able to partake in some of the attractions our naturally gifted city has to offer during your time here.

After looking through the conference program and glancing around the room, I am confident that the next two days are going to be informative, entertaining and valuable. I am glad to hear that this year the proceedings will include topics such as mental health, sitting disease and workplace violence.

I was also very interested when I saw the theme for this year's conference, "What's Your Health and Safety R.O.I?" The R.O.I in this case stands for, "Re-energize, Optimize and Inspire." Those are all worthy characteristics, and I hope you all leave this gathering ready to bring them to your workplaces.

But the theme also started me thinking about the traditional meaning of R.O.I. Because I think we all appreciate that a strong workplace health and safety culture can have a positive impact on an organization's bottom line. The financial benefits can be found in reduced absenteeism, fewer lost-time injuries, fewer WSIB claims, happier and more productive employees, and so forth.

Now, these positive impacts are sometimes hard to calculate. But they cannot be overlooked just because they are not immediately apparent on a balance sheet. Because, in my mind, workplace safety, health and wellness are like oxygen —it is when they are absent that their importance is most acutely felt. And we know this all too well, because unfortunately, we have endured our share of workplace tragedies in Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma.

And so, it is out of the common desire to prevent future sorrow and hardship that events such as this conference are held. It is out of that same desire that so many of you continue with your ceaseless efforts to encourage safety, wellness and accident prevention in your workplaces.

I am pleased to tell you that the City of Sault Ste. Marie has a longstanding commitment to health and safety. We have adopted a "Target Zero" policy, with a goal of zero workplace injuries and illnesses.

We recognize that this is in many ways an aspirational objective, one difficult to achieve in practical reality. However, the challenge of any great goal must not dissuade us from striving to attain it.

In October 2014, the City was presented with the “Safe Work, Sound Business” award by our local Chamber of Commerce for our health and safety program. I’d like to take a moment to recognize our Manager of Health and Safety, Aldo Iacoe, who is in attendance today. Aldo has been a tireless champion of health and safety and also the Target Zero policy. Thank you Aldo for your on-going work and commitment.

In closing, I would just like to commend the conference sponsors, organizers, presenters, vendors and delegates one more time for coming together to make this important event such a success. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today. Please enjoy the conference.