

Community teamwork makes **North Bay Safety Conference** a success



IHSA CEO Al Beattie, MOL Northern Region Director Peter Augruso, CPO George Gritziotis, and North Bay Committee Co-chair Emile Hamelin at the North Bay Safety Conference.

A wonderful thing happened in North Bay on April 12: everyone worked together. It was the day of the 2012 North Bay Construction Health and Safety Conference. More than 175 people gathered at the Best Western Hotel in North Bay to listen, learn, and network with industry leaders and safety professionals from around the province.

The conference was organized by the North Bay Regional Labour-Management Health and Safety Committee with the help and support of more than 32 local sponsors. This was the third health and safety conference that the committee had hosted, but this time there was much more community involvement. In 2008 the event had only seven sponsors, which grew to thirteen in 2010. This year's industry support gave the committee an opportunity to expand the event and include more workshops. It also allowed them to offer free admission to participants, a decision they believe was key to the event's success.

North Bay Mayor Al McDonald opened the conference by welcoming the participants. George Gritziotis, Ontario's Chief Prevention Officer, delivered the first keynote address. His presentation was followed by a roundtable discussion led by him, Al Beattie, President and CEO of the Infrastructure Health & Safety Association (IHSA), and Peter Augruso, Northern Region Director for the Ministry of Labour (MOL). This roundtable gave participants a unique opportunity to ask questions and discuss the things that are affecting their work and their businesses.

Participants spent the afternoon attending sessions on topics that ranged from defensive driving and scaffold safety to MOL enforcement blitzes and the new Certificate of Recognition (COR™) program.

Experts from IHSA, the MOL, and industry led these break-out sessions. Between the afternoon and evening schedule, there was definitely something of interest for everyone. This was the first time a labour-management committee had hosted an event showcasing several of the industries that IHSA serves.

Rob Ellis, the evening keynote speaker, spoke to high school students at St Joseph-Scollard Hall in the afternoon before attending the conference in the evening. Mr. Ellis reminded everyone about what can happen when safety is not a priority. David Ellis, Rob's son, was killed on the job when he was 18 years old because his employer neglected health and safety practices. David had started working to save money for university. Like many young workers, he received minimal training, and his employer had also ignored a mandatory order to install a safety device on the equipment David was using. Since his son's death, Mr. Ellis has been speaking to high school students and industry leaders across Canada to spread his message about workplace safety.

Not only does this conference demonstrate what we can accomplish when we work together, but it also highlights a focus on the northern region. IHSA is taking steps to serve its northern members better, such as by hiring more health and safety consultants for the region, developing a web page devoted to northern training and events, and partnering with local colleges and other organizations to make safety training more accessible. For more information about IHSA's activities in the north, visit ihsa.ca/north. For more information about the North Bay Regional Labour-Management Committee, visit ihsa.ca/committees.