

Supporting Canadians with Chronic Illness: How the Reducing Poverty Initiative Is Changing Lives

By: Bill Dyer, Director of Reducing Poverty Initiative

Living with a chronic condition like arthritis can affect every aspect of life — from daily mobility to long-term financial security. For many Canadians, a health setback can mean months off work without benefits, mounting expenses, and the frightening risk of falling into poverty. That's where the **Reducing Poverty Initiative (RPI)** comes in.

Funded by the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada, the RPI is a groundbreaking pilot program that helps individuals who are off work due to a non-work-related illness or injury — like arthritis — **access early support to get back to employment.**

When someone is temporarily unable to work, time is critical. Without early support or intervention, the road back to work becomes longer and harder, and financial instability worsens. RPI bridges that gap by connecting participants with a **Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP)** who offers personalized, one-on-one case management. Together, they create a return-to-work plan that respects the individual's health, needs, and goals.

Key supports through RPI may include:

- Funding for allied health services (e.g., physiotherapy, counseling, chiropractic care)
- Ergonomic assessments and job accommodations
- Supports, education and recommendations for the employer
- Emotional and practical support for a smoother and sustainable return to work

This initiative is especially important for Canadians living with arthritis, where **invisible symptoms** like pain, stiffness, and fatigue can make it difficult to maintain employment without the right support.

Currently available in **Vancouver, Kelowna, Prince George, and Nanaimo** (plus a 75 km radius around each city), RPI is showing promising outcomes: participants are returning to work earlier, avoiding long-term unemployment, and regaining their financial independence.

For people living with arthritis, programs like RPI are more than just employment support — they're about dignity, hope, and the chance to live fully despite health challenges.

Chronic illness should never mean chronic poverty. The Reducing Poverty Initiative is helping Canadians with conditions like arthritis stay connected to meaningful work and reclaim their futures — one success story at a time.

Interested in Learning More?

Please visit the Reducing Poverty Initiative website at: www.reducingpoverty.nidmar.ca or reach out via email to: reducingpoverty@nidmar.ca for more information on how to apply.