

Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Labour

Joint Statement on Healthy Workplaces

As Canada's Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers responsible for labour, we have discussed issues related to workplace health at recent Ministers annual meetings. These discussions have strengthened our belief that healthy work environments result in an improved work-life balance for employees and enhanced productivity and performance for employers.

Among the topics that have been considered are: occupational health and safety matters; psychological harassment at work; work-related stress; the challenges of achieving work-life balance; mental health problems in the workplace; and a holistic approach to wellness and productivity in the workplace. We have also had the benefit of hearing from representatives of the private sector on their efforts and commitment to ensure that workplaces are safe and that the measures implemented make business sense.

We recognize that these issues, although often considered separately, are closely interrelated. In-depth discussions involving Ministers and members of the private sector have given Ministers an appreciation of the efforts and innovations that take place to ensure safe and productive workplaces and the need to share these best practices among governments.

We are convinced that creating healthier workplaces is a win-win proposition that brings many benefits to Canadian workers, businesses and governments, including:

- Improved physical and mental health and quality of life of Canadian workers and their families.
- Increased productivity and organizational strength of Canadian enterprises.
- Lower costs of health benefits, employee assistance programs, and absenteeism.
- Reduced pressures on workers' compensation systems and public health-care, resulting in financial savings for governments and employers.

Creating healthier workplaces requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that not only strengthens existing occupational health and safety measures, but extends the concept of workplace health to include the health of the organization itself. A healthy workplace is therefore one whose culture, policies and practices create an environment that promotes the physical and mental health of employees as well as the effectiveness of the organization.

We also believe that governments have an important role to play in promoting workplace health by ensuring that workplace safety standards are maintained and by taking a leadership role in fostering and promoting research, knowledge transfer, education, and dialogue among key stakeholders, particularly all governments, employers and trade unions.

Cooperation between federal, provincial and territorial governments in the field of Labour policy is achieved through respect for constitutional responsibilities of governments and the priorities of individual jurisdictions.

Accordingly, we:

- Undertake, within our respective governmental priorities, to work towards promoting an awareness of the relationships between work and health and an understanding of the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to workplace health through an appropriate mix of activities such as consultation, research, education, information dissemination, as well as through the integration of these ideas into existing policies and priorities.
- Encourage our workplace partners to cooperate in the task of building healthy workplaces by making changes in workplace culture as well as in workplace policies and practices.
- Commit to exchanging research and information on industry best practices and disseminating this information within our own governments.
- Encourage voluntary cooperation on joint projects and collaborative work between governments when appropriate.
- Endorse federal-provincial-territorial collaboration in efforts to harmonize the Workplace Hazardous Material Information System with the system endorsed by the United Nations. We agree to discuss this issue further at a future meeting.

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