

**Report on the Meeting of
Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers of Labour and Employment
September 9, 2016, Prince George, B.C.**

Meeting Chair

The meeting took place in Prince George, B.C. and was chaired by MaryAnn Mihychuk, federal Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

Nunavut Attendees

The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Justice, William MacKay, via teleconference.

Harmonization in the field of Occupational Health and Safety – Decision Item

Deputy Minister J.R. Carr (Saskatchewan) delivered a presentation on “Options for Harmonization of Occupational Safety and Health Requirements.”

Ministers and their representatives endorsed the option featuring a 24-month workplan that takes a broader focus on barriers to trade and business operations across multiple jurisdictions to be carried out by all jurisdictions through CAALL (Labour FPT). Ministers requested an expedited timeline and a report within one year exploring the possibility of moving toward the next phase of harmonization (e.g. implementing the Australian/EU model).

Flexible Work Arrangements – Information Item

Minister Mihychuk delivered a presentation updating the PT Ministers on the federal government’s consultations on flexible work arrangements. Amending the *Canada Labour Code* to allow federally regulated workers to formally request work arrangements from their employers remains a federal priority.

Minister Flynn (Ontario) then shared experiences coming out of Ontario’s Changing Workplace Review. The Ministers then shared experiences and initiatives related to flexible work arrangements in their respective jurisdictions. Deputy Minister MacKay (Nunavut) noted that the government is a major employer and that the Department of Justice will be reviewing labour standards legislation, which will provide an opportunity to explore flex work further.

Minister Mihychuk stated that the federal government will continue to move ahead with flexible work arrangements and that the public report will be published shortly.

Workplace Mental Health: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – Decision Item

Minister Bond (BC) and Minister Regan (Nova Scotia) delivered a presentation on this issue highlighting that while much progress has been made on physical workplace health, mental health challenges are becoming a frequent area of focus in the workplace. It was noted that work needs to be done in conjunction with ministers of health.

A main focus is on occupational stressors for first responders. Professionals in those areas have been lobbying governments to adopt presumptions in favour of granting coverage for applicants suffering from psychological injuries due to workplace conditions.

During discussions several jurisdictions emphasized that the issue is broader than first responders and identified teachers, correctional workers, social workers, nurses and highway workers as being some of the most affected by mental health issues and requesting benefits for psychological stress.

Some jurisdictions, such as Manitoba, do not limit the presumption of coverage to first responders. This has not resulted in a “flood of claims” in that province. Deputy Minister MacKay pointed out the unique challenge faced by Nunavut with regard to isolated communities and working conditions of professionals.

Ministers and representatives endorsed a Joint Statement, in which they agreed to work together to take steps to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues in the workplace and to encourage workers to seek help when they need it. A copy of the Joint Statement is attached as **Appendix A**. They also expressed interest in a coordinated national action plan on PTSD.

Ontario’s Changing Workplaces Review – Information Item

Minister Flynn (Ontario) gave a presentation to Ministers on the Ontario Changing Workplace Review, including results from their public consultations and the Interim Report released July 27, 2016. Minister Flynn emphasized the importance of federal-provincial-territorial linkages in labour relations and labour standards, especially in areas of leave entitlements and flexible work options. The final report will be delivered in February 2017.

International Labour Affairs – Decision Item

Minister Mihychuk provided an update for Ministers on labour issues related to recent trade agreements, including on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement. Consultations with Canadians on TPP are ongoing. Minister Mihychuk stated that a full Parliamentary debate will be held before any final decisions are made. She also updated Ministers on the trade agreement with Europe (CETA) and the recent Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement signed in July. The federal Minister also discussed the International Labour Organization (ILO) and ongoing reviews relating to Canada’s ratification of ILO instruments with provinces and territories. A Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Strategy has strengthened collaboration on ILO issues.

This item concluded with Ministers endorsing the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Strategy on Canada and the ILO for 2017-2020.

News Release

Attached as **Appendix B** is a copy of the Government of Canada-Government of British Columbia News Release dated September 9, 2016 with respect to this meeting.

Statement

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for labour

Statement on mental health in the workplace

As ministers responsible for labour, we recognize that mental health in the workplace is a shared priority. Much work has been done in recent years to improve mental health in the workplace. There is general consensus that this issue must be addressed from both a prevention standpoint and in terms of providing support for the recovery of those affected. Continued efforts are needed to increase awareness and understanding of mental health issues in the workplace, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

We recognize that significant steps have been taken recently to ensure that supports are available for workers facing mental health injuries as a result of psychological stressors. However, more work still needs to be done.

While we continue our efforts to address mental health issues in the workplace, as part of our respective governmental responsibilities, we agreed to work together to:

1. reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues in the workplace including PTSD, and encourage workers to seek and receive the help they need when they need it;
2. explore ways to enhance supports through employers and workers' compensation boards, among others; and
3. share information on best practices and research across provinces and territories and contribute to a national action plan on PTSD.

News Release

For Immediate Release

Mental health and flex work key topics of productive discussions between federal, provincial and territorial ministers of labour

September 9, 2016 Prince George, British Columbia

Mental health in the workplace and flexible work arrangements to support workers and their families were among the issues discussed today by the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for labour. The annual meeting was co-chaired by the Honourable MaryAnn Mihychuk, Canada's Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, and the Honourable Shirley Bond, British Columbia's Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour.

The ministers examined the issue of workplace mental health, including post-traumatic stress disorder. They also highlighted the importance of this matter in a joint statement issued today, agreeing to take steps to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues in the workplace and to encourage workers to seek help when they need it. They also expressed interest in contributing to the development of a coordinated national action plan on post-traumatic stress disorder.

Minister Mihychuk provided her provincial and territorial counterparts with an overview of what she heard during recent public consultations on amending the *Canada Labour Code* to give workers in federally regulated sectors the right to request flexible work arrangements. She encouraged them to consider tackling this issue in their jurisdictions.

Occupational health and safety regulatory harmonization was discussed and governments across the country will continue to work quickly together to identify opportunities for harmonization. The ministers agreed on an action plan which identifies concrete areas for harmonization, such as personal protective equipment. These efforts will help improve occupational health and safety for Canadian workers and will also make it easier for companies working in multiple provinces and territories to support their employees from a health and safety standpoint.

The ministers responsible for labour also shared their points of view regarding labour standards and approaches to finding the right balance between both better supporting workers and meeting the needs of employers given the changing nature of work. They acknowledged that the new workplace environment requires consideration by governments.

The ministers also discussed the Federal–Provincial–Territorial Strategy on Canada and the International Labour Organization (ILO) for 2017–2020, in which Canada is becoming more active. Building on their successful collaboration on last year's ratification of *Convention 138 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment*, they agreed to continue to work together on the ratification process of *Convention 98 on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining*.

Quotes

“By working together with my colleagues from the provinces and territories on common labour-related issues, such as workplace mental health and flex work, I am confident that we can better support Canadian workers and employers and contribute to healthier and more productive workplaces across the country. By supporting our workers, we are helping the middle class grow and prosper.”

– The Honourable MaryAnn Mihychuk, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour

“It is a pleasure to host my federal, territorial and provincial labour colleagues in Prince George. By sharing information and working collaboratively, we can explore ways to build on our strong foundation of existing supports to help ensure Canadian employers and workers can continue to thrive and be productive in safe, healthy and fair workplaces.”

– The Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training for British Columbia and Minister Responsible for Labour for British Columbia

Quick Facts

- The meeting of ministers responsible for labour provides a key forum to discuss public policies and explore opportunities for cooperation on joint projects and labour initiatives.
- Throughout the year, work continues through the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation (CAALL).
- Established in 1938, CAALL is an association of federal, provincial and territorial departments of labour and heads of occupational health and safety agencies.

Further information

[The Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation](#)

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