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**To:** Bill White

**Subject:** AMO Policy Update - Presumptive PTSD Legislation for First Responders Introduced

February 18, 2016

## Presumptive PTSD Legislation for First Responders Introduced

As noted in the provincial government's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) prevention strategy announcement on February 1<sup>st</sup> [Provincial PTSD Strategy for First Responders](#), today the Province has introduced Presumptive PTSD Legislation for police, firefighters, paramedics, emergency dispatchers, correctional workers, and First Nations emergency response teams ([Ontario to Introduce Legislation to Support First Responders with PTSD](#)). The announcement was made by the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Kevin Flynn, who was accompanied by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Honourable Yasir Naqvi.

Ontario's first responders do challenging and important work in our communities and municipal governments recognize that their health, safety, and well-being are important.

If passed, the *Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act* (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), 2016, would allow faster access to WSIB compensation and proper treatment for first responders. Under presumptive legislation, if an emergency services worker covered by the presumption is diagnosed, it would be presumed to be work-related and the worker's claim would be accepted. This proposed legislation will require employers to implement PTSD prevention plans for first responders and that they will be made public. At this time, the draft legislation is not publicly available so we are not able to provide any analysis of its content.

AMO members need to ensure that their corporate municipal staff update their Human Resources policies, practices, and plans accordingly. We understand that in March 2016 PTSD prevention materials, check lists, and plans suitable for all municipal governments will be available on the Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA) website.

If the proposed legislation is passed, there will be some immediate unfunded financial impacts on municipal employers, and the provincial government (i.e. Ontario Provincial Police). It can be expected that Schedule 1 municipalities will experience increased WSIB rates whereas Schedule 2 municipal employers will pay for the actual presumptive PTSD claim costs as well as the WSIB administrative fees. The OPP does have a robust Mental Health Strategy for their staff and we are seeking further information on how the Province will manage any associated presumptive PTSD costs for those who work under the 324 municipal OPP contracts.

Municipal governments who employ First Responders are already incurring costs related to PTSD in areas such as WSIB claims and in absenteeism rates. It is expected that enhanced prevention and earlier treatment may help reduce costs in the longer term. As employers, municipal governments provide support to firefighters, police officers, and paramedics that suffer from PTSD. It's our duty and it's the right thing to do. We recognize the important work that they do.

At the same time, municipal governments are challenged to afford the rising costs of emergency services. AMO continues to call on the provincial government to help control the rising cost of emergency services so that municipalities don't struggle to support first responders when they need it the most.

We will provide further information on this draft legislation to our members as it becomes available.

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