

From: Minister of Labour (MOL) [<mailto:MinisterofLabour@ontario.ca>]
Sent: March-24-16 2:02 PM
To: Bill White
Cc: randy.pettapiececo@pc.ola.org
Subject: Ontario Minister of Labour's response

Mr. Bill White
CAO/Clerk
Town of Minto
Bwhite@town.minto.on.ca

Dear Mr. White:

Mr. Randy Pettapiece, MPP for Perth-Wellington, has written to me on behalf of Minto Town Council and forwarded council's motion concerning coverage for emergency care nurses in relation to Bill 163, the proposed Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder), 2016. I appreciate receiving your council's views.

Our government recognizes that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a significant risk for our first responders, who are frequently exposed to traumatic events. To address the associated challenges with first responder mental health, our government is putting in place a comprehensive strategy to improve the prevention of and resiliency to developing PTSD, and to ensure supports are in place for first responders who have been diagnosed with PTSD.

On February 18, 2016, I introduced Bill 163. The legislation, if passed, would provide entitlement and presumptive PTSD coverage for first responders under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*. If a worker to whom the proposed amendments apply is diagnosed with PTSD, the condition would be presumed to be work-related and the worker's entitlement would be adjudicated in accordance with the proposed provision. This would help the worker receive faster access to compensation and proper treatment, ultimately supporting positive recovery outcomes. On March 22, the bill was ordered back to the legislature for third reading.

All other workers, such as emergency care nurses, who are in other occupations with Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) coverage that are not included in the proposal would continue to be able to bring forward claims for PTSD, which the WSIB would adjudicate under its current process.

Additionally, we have proposed amendments under the *Ministry of Labour Act* that would provide the Minister of Labour with the ability to direct employers of workers covered by the presumption to provide the Minister with their PTSD prevention plans and to make those plans public. This would encourage the development of plans, help to measure progress, highlight gaps and inform future prevention initiatives.

This proposed legislation builds on our previously announced PTSD prevention strategy, which includes:

- The creation of a radio and digital campaign aimed at increasing awareness about PTSD among first responders, their families and communities and eliminating the stigma that too often prevents those in need from seeking help
- An annual leadership summit to be hosted by the Minister of Labour to highlight best practices, recognize leaders, and monitor progress in dealing with PTSD
- A free online toolkit with resources on PTSD tailored to meet the needs of employers and each of the first responder sectors
- Grants for research that supports the prevention of PTSD.

We are getting started on the prevention initiatives right away, with the launch of the public radio and digital awareness campaign this month.

This is the beginning of a new way forward in preventing PTSD and providing support for our first responder community in Ontario. Thank you for writing about this important issue.

Sincerely,

[Original signed by]

Kevin Flynn
Minister of Labour

c: Mr. Randy Pettapiece, MPP, Perth-Wellington