

WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Burlington Chamber of Commerce & Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade

Issue

It is widely recognized that mental health problems in the workplace have a severe impact on Canada's and Ontario's productivity. Addressing these problems is more than good business; it is the right thing to do. Despite significant efforts by both provincial and federal governments over the last few years, there remains much to be done in the areas of research and promotion. The provincial government has a key role to play in continuing its efforts at mitigating the costs of workplace mental health issues and ensuring that employers are ready and able to properly and positively address workplace mental health issues.

Background

The Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety have provide the following research evidence to demonstrate the significant impact of mental health problems in the workplace.

- 1 in 5 Canadians experience a psychological health problem or illness in any given year and in some areas, such as Ontario, this number is as high as 1 in 4.¹
- Psychological health problems or illnesses are the number one cause of disability in Canada.¹
- Psychological health problems cost the Canadian economy ~\$51 billion per year, \$20 billion of which results from work-related causes.¹
- 47% of Canadians consider their work to be the most stressful part of daily life.¹
- Psychological health problems affect mid-career workers the most, lowering the productivity of the Canadian work force.¹
- Only 23% of Canadian workers would feel comfortable talking to their employer about a psychological health issue.²
- According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), in any given week, at least 500,000 employed Canadians are unable to work due to mental health problems. This includes approximately 355,000 disability cases plus approximately 175,000 full-time workers absent from work due to mental illness.

At one time a similar crisis existed with workplace physical safety. Measurement and tracking of incidence rates, coupled with public awareness and the implementation of occupational health and safety regulations and legislation, played a strategic role in turning the tide. The same can be true for workplace mental health.

When not addressed, psychological health problems in the workplace lead to absenteeism, decreased productivity and quality of work issues, which in turn impact business success. By identifying and reducing workplace risks of psychological injury or illness, employers will benefit from workforce stability, increased productivity, reduced insurance costs, reduced risk of legal or regulatory sanctions, and a healthier financial bottom

¹ Mental Health Commission of Canada. 2016. National Standard

² Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. 2016. Mental Health

line. Similarly, employees will benefit due to the impact upon their health, morale, work life quality and ability to perform at their highest capacity.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Identify mental health in the workplace as a key priority for occupational health and safety research grants and funding innovation projects.
2. Ensure that local community resources, using evidence based treatment practices, are visible to employers and employees, easily accessible and affordable.
3. Promote the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (CSA Z1003)
4. Provide training and education for business leaders with a focus on positive ways to address and respond to workplace mental health issues.