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MAR 14 2018

His Worship Les Gamble
Mayor
Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers
11 Birch Lake Road
RR3, Site 1
PO Box 5
Massey, Ontario
P0P 1P0

Dear Mayor Gamble:

It was a pleasure to meet with you at the 2018 Rural Ontario Municipal Association Conference and discuss the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) premium rates, and the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017* and its impact on small rural and northern municipalities. The views of our province's municipalities are important to me and I appreciated the opportunity to receive your feedback.

As you pointed out, the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) presumption for first responders does have the potential to increase WSIB-related costs for employers of first responders. However, I would like to note that the WSIB has been working to improve its financial stability. As a result of this work, the WSIB is well ahead of its prescribed funding targets and recently announced that it expects to be full funding by 2020. In 2018, there was an average premium rate reduction of 3.3 per cent and this was in addition to the average 6.2 per cent reduction provided in 2017. As the WSIB continues to improve its financial stability, it is anticipated that additional reductions to average premium rates will occur.

I appreciate you sharing the initiatives your municipality has undertaken to address the prevalence of PTSD in first responders such as paramedics. Our government is continuing to enhance programs to ensure that first responders in Ontario have the supports they need. We launched a strategy aimed at reducing the risk of PTSD among first responders. This strategy included: a PTSD awareness campaign to help eliminate the stigma that too often prevents those in need from seeking help; an annual leadership summit hosted by the Minister of Labour to highlight best practices, recognize leaders, and monitor progress in dealing with PTSD; firstrespondersfirst.ca, a free online PTSD toolkit with resources tailored to meet the needs of employers; and grants to support the prevention or mitigation of PTSD.

As well, the WSIB is continuing to strengthen its approach in regards to workers with trauma-related psychological injuries. Dedicated teams have been established to help ensure workers with PTSD receive the services they need to help them access treatment, and return to work safely. This includes the WSIB's PTSD roster of psychiatrists and psychologists. This roster helps build additional capacity in communities across Ontario so that workers have access to timely services from professionals for the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of PTSD.

I understand that you are looking for the province to assist municipalities with costs related to first responders and the PTSD presumption. However, Ontario employers participating in the WSIB program are responsible for their premiums and fees. The provincial government does not share or compensate any employer for WSIB costs.

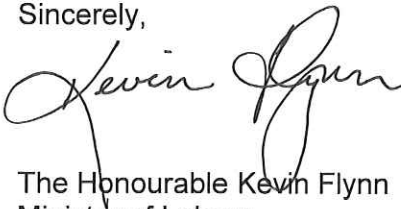
The *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017* also introduced several new scheduling rules under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*. One of the new rules will require employers to pay wages to an employee for three hours of work if the employee is scheduled to be on call but, despite being available to work, is either not called in to work or works less than three hours. This will be required for each 24-hour period the employee is on call. These scheduling changes will come into effect on January 1, 2019.

An exception to the on call pay requirements applies if the employee is on call, or if their employer is asking them to work or be on call, in order to ensure the continued delivery of essential public services—such as fire, utility, and snow removal services, regardless of who delivers those services—and the employee is not required to work. This exception would apply to paramedics.

The exception was developed to ensure that public safety was not compromised as a result of the new scheduling provisions. The phrase "essential public services" refers to services that are provided to the public and which may be considered essential because it is necessary for an employer to prevent situations that could result in danger to life, health or safety; the destruction or serious deterioration of machinery, equipment or premises; serious environmental damage; or disruption of the administration of the courts.

Once again, it was a pleasure meeting with you. Thank you for sharing your feedback and I look forward to continuing our work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Flynn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Flynn".

The Honourable Kevin Flynn
Minister of Labour

c: Mr. Fern Dominelli, Chief Administrative Officer, Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board