



NEWS RELEASE

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Employer's Council Views On Mental Health In The Workplace Are Regressive and Reprehensible

Mary Shortall, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour (NLFL), has expressed outrage at a recent letter sent to MHAs by the Newfoundland and Labrador Employers Council (NLEC) opposing the introduction of presumptive mental health legislation for all workers in Newfoundland and Labrador

Shortall expressed shock that the NLEC would formally decry what Legislatures across the country have long recognized - the need to update legislation to address mental health in the workplace. This province is one of the last in the country to enact presumptive mental health legislation to protect workers who suffer from mental injuries or illnesses as a result of their work.

"That is why we have joined the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees (NAPE), along with our affiliates in calling on our provincial government to enact comprehensive legislation to make it easier for those workers with workplace mental health injuries to access workers compensation and other supports," said Shortall.

Shortall contends that the NLEC report is full of inaccuracies, stating that other jurisdictions in the country that have introduced presumptive legislation have not seen their workers compensation systems put under financial stress, nor have they seen any significant increase in claims.

"In their letter, the NLEC asserts that presumptive legislation means that workers will be able to simply claim a mental health injury and be granted compensation automatically," says Shortall. "That is simply not true. Presumptive legislation requires a diagnosis from an appropriate health professional. The difference is that the worker, once diagnosed, will have quicker access to the supports they need. Why should someone suffering from a serious work-related mental health injury be further traumatized by being denied timely support?"



Research shows that mental illness not only costs the Canadian economy over \$50 billion in lost productivity, but also that the social and economic cost to workers and their families are equally significant. Shortall believes that employers would be better advised to focus their energies on what they can do to prevent mental health injuries in their workplace.

“This is not the first time that the NLEC has opposed changes that benefit workers,” she argues. “This is not about taking money from employers pockets. Government has a responsibility to address major workplace mental health injuries and ensure injured workers are provided the support they need and deserve. This attempt by the NLEC to sabotage the introduction of presumptive legislation is unacceptable and reprehensible.”

“Our discussions with workers and employers, along with the views of society in general, show that mental health issues have been overlooked for way too long,” she concludes. “The NLFL and our 70,000 members remain fully committed to the NAPE campaign, and any other action which aims to improve workplace mental health legislation because it’s the smart, fair and right thing to do.”

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