

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
AND
THE UNION OF NORTHERN WORKERS

Mental Health in the Workplace

This Memorandum of Understanding is to give effect to the understanding reached between the Employer and the Union regarding issues of mental health in the workplace.

The Government of the Northwest Territories and the Union of Northern Workers recognize the importance of ensuring a workplace culture which promotes and improves the psychological health and safety of all employees in the workplace. The Union and the GNWT have a common interest in promoting and enhancing a working relationship consistent with the principles of mutual respect, confidentiality and co-operation.

A task force, comprised of the GNWT/Union Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee acting as a Technical Committee, and a Steering Committee, **consisting of senior leadership of both parties**, is established with a long-term focus **on and commitment to improving psychological health in the workplace.** ~~from senior leadership of the parties.~~ It will focus on ~~continuous improvement and~~ the successful implementation of measures to improve mental health in the workplace **and ensure that psychological health and safety forms part of the organizational decision-making process in the workplace.**

Accordingly, the parties agree to establish a Steering Committee within ninety (90) days of the ratification of this Collective Agreement. The Steering Committee is to establish the terms of reference for the Technical Committee with respect to mental health in the workplace within thirty (30) days of such meeting. These dates may be extended by mutual agreement of the Steering Committee members. The terms of reference may be amended from time to time by mutual consent of the Steering Committee members.

The Technical Committee will provide a preliminary report of recommendations to the Steering Committee within four months of receiving its terms of reference from the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee members may, by mutual agreement, extend this period.

The responsibilities of the Technical Committee shall include, but may not be limited to:

- Identifying ways of reducing and eliminating the stigma in the workplace that is too frequently associated with mental health issues;

- Identifying ways to better communicate the issues of mental health challenges in the workplace and tools such as existing policies, legislation and directives available to support employees facing these challenges;
- **Considering the unique challenges that impact mental health in the Northwest Territories, including a vast geographic area, small remote communities, diverse cultures, and the impact of the Residential School experience on survivors, their families and communities;**
- Reviewing practices from other jurisdictions and employers that might be instructive for the GNWT;
- Reviewing the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (the Standard) and identify how implementation shall best be achieved within the GNWT, recognizing that not all workplaces are the same
- Ensuring the participation of Health and Safety committees and representatives, including the communication of, and training on, the goals of the National Standard;
- Outlining any possible challenges and barriers that may impact the successful implementation of a psychological health and safety management system; and
- Outlining areas where the objectives reflected in the Standard, or in the work of other organizations, represent a gap with existing approaches within the GNWT. Once identified, ongoing evaluation of actions to ensure those gaps are addressed. The National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace should be considered a minimum standard that the Employer's occupational health and safety program may exceed.

The Steering Committees will be comprised of an equal number of Employer and Union representatives. The Steering Committee is responsible for determining the number and the identity of their respective Technical Committee representatives.