

# National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

## BACKGROUND

In recent years, a growing base of evidence has illuminated the importance of addressing the psychological requirements of employees in the workplace. A need to assist organizations in dealing with the issue has also been identified.

Martin Shain, PhD, in a 2010 report commissioned by the Mental Health Commission of Canada titled 'Tracking the Perfect Legal Storm', asserted that there is an emerging legal duty in Canada for employers to provide and maintain a psychologically safe workplace. The report led to the discussion of a sustainable, systematic approach including development of a national standard for managing psychological health and safety in the workplace.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is championing the development of a National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace ("the Standard")<sup>1</sup> and is working collaboratively with the Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ) and CSA Standards.

The funding for this project is being provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada and Bell.

MHCC and its partners believe that the stakeholders would be most receptive to implementing the Standard if they were provided information about the Standard well in advance of the implementation phase.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is the 'National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace'?**

The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace will be a stand-alone voluntary standard. It will provide a methodology that will lead to measureable improvements in psychological health and safety for Canadian employees in their workplaces.

### **Why is the Standard being developed?**

Mental health problems and illnesses are the leading cause of short- and long-term disability in Canada and the toll on Canadian workers and workplaces is substantial. The economic burden of mental disorders in Canada has been estimated at \$51-billion per year. Almost \$20-billion of that comes from workplace losses.

Reports prepared by workplace mental health expert Dr. Martin Shain for the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) also highlight ongoing legal developments related to mental health

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<sup>1</sup> A "standard", defined by the ISO, is "a document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context" (ISO/IEC Guide 2, Clause 3.2).

protection in the Canadian workplace. The Shain reports are a compelling call to action for both employers and policy makers.

The Commission's intent in developing the Standard is to provide systematic supports that will enable Canadian employers to develop and continuously improve psychologically safe and healthy work environments for their employees. The goal is to make the Standard user-friendly and easily accessible to Canadian employers and other interested parties.

### **Who is the Standard being developed for?**

The Standard is being developed for both employees and employers. Employees will benefit from workplaces that promote and protect their psychological health and safety.

For employers, the business case rests on four main parameters – enhanced cost effectiveness, improved risk management, increased organizational recruitment and retention as well as corporate social responsibility.

### **Who is creating the Standard?**

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is championing the development of the Standard, working collaboratively with the Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ) and CSA Standards.

The BNQ and CSA will jointly manage the Standard development process and publication. The Standard will be developed as a “stand-alone” National Standard of Canada (NSC). The designation for the Standard shall be CAN/BNQ/CSA.

### **Once the new standard is approved and published, how will it be communicated and who will be responsible for disseminating it?**

The Mental Health Commission of Canada, CSA and BNQ will make the Standard available via their websites immediately following publication. MHCC, working through its Workforce Advisory Committee, is creating a plan to increase awareness and inform key stakeholders of the Standard in the months following publication.

### **Who implements the Standard?**

Implementation of the Standard is up to individual organizations, labour groups, professional organizations, industry groups and other interested parties. The Standard is intended to provide guidance for employers, employees and employee representatives who are interested in protecting and promoting the psychological health and safety of workers. It will be of particular interest to senior executives, unions/organized labour and other groups that represent the interests of employees as well as human resources, occupational health and safety, organizational development, risk management and employee assistance professionals.

### **What are the advantages of implementing the Standard?**

The advantages for employees are the protection from psychological harm in the workplace and the promotion of psychological wellbeing. For employers, potential advantages include enhanced competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness resulting from; reduced absenteeism as well as short- and long-term disability costs; reduced turnover and enhanced recruitment; higher levels of employee engagement, creativity and innovation; lower rates of error and physical injuries; greater potential for becoming an “employer of choice” (enhanced reputation as a good place to work); and reduced risk of legal issues related to psychological harm to employees.

**Who is funding the development of the Standard?**

The funding for this project is being provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada and Bell.

**How much is each funding partner contributing?**

The total is just over \$475,000. The combined contribution of HRSDC, Health Canada and Public Health Agency of Canada is \$325,000. Bell made a \$150,000 contribution.

**What is the process for developing a Standard?**

Anyone can come forward and request a standard. Often it is a consumer organization, trade/industry association or a government department, which has observed a need. CSA and BNQ (in Quebec), evaluate the usefulness of a potential standard in meeting the need, and assesses the level of support in the community and industry.

When called on to develop a standard, they form a committee composed of volunteer members. The volunteers are selected to represent the various interest groups most likely to be affected by the standard, such as labour, business and industry, regulatory bodies, science and academia, and consumer groups, as applicable.

BNQ and CSA function as a neutral third party, providing a structure and a forum for developing the standard. The committees are created using a "balanced matrix" approach, which means that each committee is structured to capitalize on the combined strengths and expertise of its members - with no single group dominating.

The committee considers the views of all participants and develops the details of the standard by a consensus process, which includes the principles of inclusive participation, respect for diverse interests, and transparency.

**Who is on the Committees that are developing the Standard?**

A committee of health and safety professionals, executives, labour leaders, government representatives, experts in law and policy and other groups has been created.

**Click below for a complete list of Committee members is available on the CSA and BNQ website.**

[English](#)   [French](#)

**How does this Standard align with existing standards such as ISO standards?**

The Standard will follow the 5-element ISO format so that it aligns with other standards that employers and employees are familiar with—particularly the ISO 14000, OHSAS 18000, ISO 9000, the CSA Z 1000 and Z1002 series, and BNQ’s Healthy Enterprise Standard.

**When will the public have an opportunity to provide feedback?**

Public feedback is seen as critical to the development process. A 60-day public review period is scheduled for the fall of 2011 with specific details to be announced at a later date.

**When will the Standard be completed?**

Publication of the Standard is anticipated in late summer 2012.

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## Members List

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Doctor I. M. F. (Ian) Arnold	MHCC - Workforce Advisory Committee
Ms. Mary Ann Baynton	Mary Ann Baynton & Associates
Mr. Roger Bertrand	GP2S - Groupe de promotion pour la prévention en santé
Mr. Richard Boughen	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Mr. Simon Brascoupé	National Aboriginal Health Organization
Doctor David Brown	Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC)
Mr. Charles Bruce	Nova Scotia Public Service Long Term Disability Trust
Ms. Claudine Ducharme	Morneau-Shepell
Ms. Marie-Thérèse Dugré	Solareh
Ms. Lucie Fournier	Bell Canada BCE Inc.
Mr. Martin Gélinas	Air Canada Santé et mieux-être organisationnels
Ms. Kathy GermAnn	Mental Health Commission of Canada Workplace/Workforce Research & Policy
Ms. Caroline Goulet	Neuvaction
Mr. Andrew Harkness	Workplace Safety and Prevention Services (WSPS) The Centre for Health and Safety Innovation
Ms. Mike Harnett	WorkSMART Ergonomics Ltd
Mr. Len Hong	Former President and CEO, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
Ms. Kathy Jurgens	Canadian Mental Health Association
Doctor Niels Koehncke	University of Saskatchewan and Ministry of Labour R&WS
Mr. François Legault	Santé Canada - Health Canada
Ms. Lynn MacDonald	Northern Health
Mr. Greg Meloche	Worksafe BC
Doctor Mario Messier	Médecin, santé au travail
Mr. Stan Murray	National Quality Institute
Doctor Joti Samra	Mainland Medical Clinic
Mr. Bawan Saravanabawan	HRSDC - Labour Program
Mr. Mike Schwartz	Great West Life Assurance Company
Doctor Martin Shain	Neighbour at Work Centre
Ms. Lori-Ann Smith	Public Health Agency of Canada Centre for Health Promotion
Ms. Drew Sousa	City of Mississauga
Doctor Michel Vézina	Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ)

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