

July 30, 2021

Ontario Workplace Recovery Advisory Committee Submission

As the voice and regulator of the human resources profession in Ontario, HRPAs is pleased to participate in this consultation for the Ontario Workplace Recovery Advisory Committee. Representing over 23,000 human resources professionals across the province, HRPAs has developed policy positions informed by our membership, most recently a Return to the Workplace survey conducted in June 2021 and a pulse survey this month asking targeted questions regarding workplace recovery issues.

HRPA recommends the following to the Ontario Workplace Recovery Advisory Committee:

- **Focus programs on training and upskilling Ontario workers and supporting workplaces.** With evolving work needs where automation, AI, remote work and shifting markets are creating obsolescence, job loss and a need for new skills, supporting both Ontario workers and workplaces is a critical step in maintaining a world-class workforce and talent supply. The HRPAs believes the Ontario government needs to continue and enhance supporting workers and workplaces in this transition. Over 72% of survey respondents identified upskilling and reskilling programs as a priority and HRPAs believes the focus must be on supporting workers but also incentivizing workplaces.
- **Ensuring province-wide access to broadband internet service.** For all Ontarians to participate in an increasingly remote, global and technologically advanced economy, affordable and available access to high-speed internet services is critical. The Ontario government has recently announced investments in improved access to northern/rural regions and we encourage them to continue until all Ontarians have access.
- **Extending of ESA and health and safety to remote working and “gig economy” workers.** Workers need to be protected regarding health and safety whether they work remotely or in the office. A review of OHSAs to clarify and strengthen worker protections and employer obligations for remote work will promote health and safety where there may not be formal programming. With the emergence of the gig economy, the Ontario government should consider mechanisms and circumstances where gig workers are provided additional protections under the ESA and have greater access to the social safety net that provides support for traditional workers.
- **Improving access to flexible childcare services.** As a key barrier to workplace recovery (identified by 62% of HRPAs survey respondents), we believe greater access to, and support for, childcare services is important to enabling participation and retention in the labour market, making Ontario a leader and desirable place to work. Childcare supports will provide one lever of support for women in the workplace – particularly women in marginalized communities – who bear a significantly greater responsibility for childcare. A McKinsey & Company study found that women with children under 10 years old are nearly twice as likely to consider leaving the workforce than men and are feeling significantly more exhausted, burned out and under pressure.



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- **Clarifying interjurisdictional issues.** As technology enables remote work, issues around differences in jurisdictions within Canada (e.g. Ontario and Quebec) as well as international will be much more prevalent. We recommend that Ontario works with the federal government and other jurisdictions to provide clarity around how HR professionals in Ontario should handle differences in employment standards, taxation, pensions, insurance, etc.
- **Pay equity and transparency.** We know there is inequality, particularly with women and marginalized communities, when considering those who have retained jobs throughout the pandemic and those who have become reemployed. Promoting transparency is important to a fair and equitable workforce, HRPA recommends bringing the *Ontario Pay Transparency Act, 2018*, into effect.

HRPA is pleased to provide this submission and appreciates the Ontario Workplace Recovery Advisory Committee's desire for feedback from key stakeholders. If you have further questions or concerns, don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Louise Taylor Green'.

Louise Taylor Green
Chief Executive Officer
Human Resources Professionals Association