Action on Workplace Stress:

**Mental Injury Prevention Tools
for Ontario Workers**

**PART 3 — What Are
Other Jurisdictions Doing?**

Action on Workplace Stress

A Worker's Guide to Addressing Workplace Causes of Mental Distress

This guide and resource kit will provide workers a basic understanding and a place to start to learn about workplace stress and what to do about it. The guide gives definitions, common causes of mental distress, legal frameworks (focusing on Ontario), possible actions to take, and resources available. It is an introduction and action guide created by workers for workers.

These tools are not clinical diagnostic tools. They are not meant to diagnose medical or psychological conditions or to be used by a physician to these ends. These tools are designed to identify problems that may exist within the workplace and provide possible avenues to address them.

This resource kit and tools are provided with a focus on the Ontario jurisdiction – workers in other provinces or in federally regulated workplaces should refer to their own legal framework.

PART 3—What Are Other Jurisdictions Doing?

European developments and regulation

Since the early 1990's, European employers have had an obligation to develop "a coherent overall prevention policy which covers technology, organization of work, working conditions, social relationships and influence of factors related to the working environment" (Council Directive, 1989, Article 6 (g)).

As a result, Europeans have developed many workplace tools to help workplaces assess and control workplace psychosocial hazards. In fact, as a result of this strong emphasis, a new discipline has emerged—Work Organization Specialist (in addition to safety professionals, ergonomists and occupational hygienists).

The year 2012 has been declared the year for a campaign on psychosocial risks at work by the Committee of Senior Labour Inspectors (SLIC). The aim of the project is "development of an inspection toolkit for targeted interventions on occupational health and safety (psycho-social risks)" (Swedish Work Environment Authority A, 2012, para. 5). An example of one the inspection checklists can be found at http://bit.ly/WhR8VT

The action started in 2010 when the European Union (EU) decided to develop a campaign for psychosocial hazards. Led by Sweden, 12 member states formed a working group that met three times in 2011 to develop a plan. In 2012 the campaign was launched and focused on the health sector, the service sector (hotels and restaurants), and the transportation sector. So far, 22 countries have reported progress (Swedish Work Environment Authority A, 2012, para. 5):

- More than 50% of EU countries have had training activities for labour inspectors
- At least 16% of EU countries have started their inspections
- EU countries are educating stakeholders such as the public, employers, health and safety representatives, and occupational health and safety staff.

In Canada—"National Standard on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (Z1003)

Released on January 16, 2013, the "National Standard on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace" provides employers with a systematic process and tools to create psychologically safe workplaces. It was developed in response to the emerging realization in Canada and around the world, that workplace psychological health and safety is as important as physical health and safety. Previously, most discussions of workplace mental health issues have focused solely on workers' ability to cope in the existing workplace environment; there has been little discussion about organizational factors such as high work demands or lack of resources and support that can cause or worsen health impacts on workers. It has become clear that to be

effective, strategies to improve workplace mental health must include prevention on an organizational level, as well as organizational and individual supports for workers suffering from diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health conditions.

The Standard, which is voluntary, stresses the importance of identifying and addressing factors such as work demands, work organization, work relationships, threats of violence, violence, discrimination, harassment, and bullying that negatively impact workers' physical and mental health. Preventing "psychosocial hazards" at their source is an important aspect of an employer's overall strategy for maintaining a safe and healthy workplace and in meeting the requirements of the standard.

The Standard provides an organizational approach to creating a psychologically safe workplace. Steps described include commitment and policy, planning, implementation, evaluation, and review.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada championed development of the Standard and worked collaboratively with the Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ), the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), and a committee made up of health and safety professionals, labour representatives, executives, government representatives, experts in law and policy, and other groups. Funding for the project was provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and Bell.

In a recent review of the proposed CSA standard regarding Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (Z1003), corporate lawyers (Shane Todd and Cheryl Edwards) objected to the standard as far exceeding the legal expectations placed on employers by North American Health and Safety legislation (Edwards & Todd, 2012). This in spite of actions in Europe and in Quebec, where a regulation exists that mandates prevention of workplace harassment http://bit.ly/11nrLAv. However, if one takes seriously the duty of employers to do everything reasonable in the circumstances to protect worker health and safety (as per the "General Duty Clause"), then one can see the wisdom in the European approach.

The Standard can be downloaded for free after registering at http://bit.ly/YSvN3o