

Ask The Expert: JHSCs in Alberta



QUESTION

We are a school board in Alberta with 15 different schools. Under Bill 30, would we have to start a joint health and safety committee (JHSC) at each school with over 20 employees’

ANSWER

Yes.

EXPLANATION

You must establish a JHSC *at each site* that employs 20 or more employees; in addition, a health and safety representative (HSR) is required for each site with 5 to 19 employees. You can’t, in other words, have one JHSC purport to represent all the sites.

However, there’s another option. Under Section 16(4) of the *OHS Act*, you can apply to the Director for an exemption or variance from the JHSC requirements based on the work conditions of the particular site(s), including:

- The nature of the work done at the site;
- Union support for the exemption; and/or
- The frequency of injury or illness at the site or particular industry involved (like a school).

MY SUGGESTION

The exemption option might make sense especially since at first blush, a school seems like the kind of site that would be a strong candidate for an exemption as long as it has the unions behind it. I also suggest you talk to other school boards and find out what they’re doing.