

Should the OHS Laws & Standards Be the Same Across Canada?



Under Canada's current system, the OHS laws and standards are set by the federal government for federally-regulated employers and by each province and territory for the non-federally-regulated employers operating within their jurisdictions. Although the OHS laws across Canada have many things in common, there are enough differences to make compliance with these laws in multiple jurisdictions challenging.

When we recently asked if you think the OHS laws and standards should be the same across Canada, more than 85% said yes. And it appears that the country's labour ministers agree.

The provincial and territorial labour ministers recently gathered for an annual meeting with federal Labour Minister MaryAnn Mihychuk in Prince George, BC.

BC's Labour Minister Shirley Bond says many companies do business across provinces and struggle to meet the unique health and safety regulations in each jurisdiction. Bond says the ministers presented the federal government with a working plan of how to move forward on creating harmonized regulations.

The goal is to harmonize OHS requirements to make it easier for businesses who do work in different provinces and territories to adhere to the rules.

Mihychuk says that although they're looking at a two-year plan to unify standards, the government wants to speed up the process.

(Labour ministers also discussed developing a more coordinated approach to addressing mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder in the workplace.)

A unified, national approach to workplace safety regulation wouldn't necessarily be that difficult to establish. After all, the country's approach to hazardous substances in the workplace 'WHMIS' is basically the same in every Canadian jurisdiction already.

And as noted above, the current OHS laws in each jurisdiction have a lot in

common. In addition, many of these laws incorporate various CSA and other voluntary safety standards, which further serves to unify the OHS standards Canada-wide.

We'll keep you updated on any developments in this process.