

September 14, 2015

The Honourable Kevin Flynn
Minister of Labour
400 University Avenue - 14th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1T7

Dear Minister Flynn,

RE: The Changing Workplaces Review

The Emergency Services Steering Committee (ESSC) is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the review on Changing Workplaces.

As the level of government responsible for funding police, fire and emergency medical services, many municipalities in Ontario are increasingly concerned about the rising costs of emergency services, particularly the sharp increase in labour costs over the past several years. Labour costs within the emergency services sector are increasing to such an extent they are eroding the ability of municipal governments to maintain other programs and vital infrastructure.

For the past 10 years, the ESSC has been working on behalf of the municipalities represented by MARCO (Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario), LUMCO (Large Urban Mayors Caucus of Ontario), additional Ontario municipalities responsible for the delivery of emergency services and the police services boards represented by the OAPSB (Ontario Association of Police Services Boards), to find ways to curb these rising labour costs and achieve value in emergency services for Ontario taxpayers.

The Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association (OMHRA) has representation on the ESSC, and we understand their members have mirrored our concerns on a matter not directly connected with your area of review, but one that cannot be overlooked. Specifically, municipalities in Ontario believe the interest arbitration process is in need of immediate review and change.

Interest arbitration awards, which stipulate the binding terms and conditions of employment for staff in the emergency service sector, provide wages and benefits to employees well beyond what would be freely bargained. These interest arbitration awards are neither reasonable nor responsible from a municipal budget perspective and cannot be maintained without commensurate increases in taxes.

While we understand the review of the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (LRA) is not examining the specific legislation that applies to public sector employees such as police and firefighters, we feel it is imperative to note meaningful change will not be accomplished until a review of this specific legislation occurs.

This is such an important issue for our membership that the ESSC would commit to partner with you to examine the interest arbitration system in Ontario to help find a sustainable solution.

The ESSC appreciates the opportunity to submit our comments during the *Changing Workplace Review*. As always, we are available to discuss these concerns and explore solutions.

Sincerely,



Art Zuidema,
City Manager, City of London and Chair, ESSC

Cc: Rick Goldring, Mayor, City of Burlington and LUMCO ESSC liaison
Jeff Lehman, Mayor, City of Barrie
Ken Seiling, Regional Chair, Waterloo Region
Susan Shannon , ESSC, Project Coordinator