



Ontario Crown Attorneys' Association

180 Dundas Street West
Suite 2100, Box 30
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z8



Association of Law Officers of the Crown

180 Dundas Street West
Suite 2004, Box 11
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z8



Ontario Public Service Employees Union

100 Lesmill Road
Toronto, Ontario M3B 3P8

AMAPCEO

1 Dundas St. W.
Suite 2310
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z3

SENT BY EMAIL

March 4, 2022

Michelle E. DiEmanuele
Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Ontario Public Service
Whitney Block R. 6420
99 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, ON
M7A 1A1

Secretary DiEmanuele,

RE: OPS Return to the Workplace Plan

We're writing to you on behalf of our over 47,000 members employed in the OPS, in response to the March 2, 2022 update on the OPS Return to the Workplace Plan. Specifically, we're writing to express our disappointment and concern with respect to the announcement that employees working remotely should expect to return to the workplace for a minimum of three days per week as of April 4, 2022. This represents a significant departure from the previous Graduated Return to OPS Workplaces Plan (GROW), which contemplated a more gradual re-entry into the physical workplace. It is a plan that does not have our support.

The health and safety of our members is of the utmost importance. Throughout the pandemic we have worked with you and your colleagues at Treasury Board towards a shared goal – to keep our members safe. We have provided input into the Employer's proposed policies, including GROW and the Safe Workplace Directive. We have also worked with the Employer on individual member issues to ensure people had the flexibility and empathy and accommodations they needed. Together we have ensured that the OPS has been able to continue to do its important work as safely as possible.

It is in that context that we were particularly disappointed that we were not consulted on this latest announcement. It was presented to us as a decision that had already been made, even as we had made it clear that we expected to be consulted as we had been in the past. Had we been consulted, we would have advised the Employer to proceed with a gradual return as had previously been promised. This would allow our members and other employees to reacclimate to the workplace after having worked remotely (except as required by operational needs) for over two years and for the Employer to work through the issues that may arise. We would have also advised the Employer that failing to plan for a gradual return would cause significant stress and anxiety on the part of our members, particularly when that announcement came with the removal of protective measures.

Our members are indeed now reaching out to us, concerned about this week's announcement. They were surprised to first hear the news in the media, and are worried about immediately transitioning into a minimum three-day a week attendance in the physical office. The announcement did not provide enough details for members to feel confident in their return to the workplace. We are not able to provide them with any assurance, having not seen the plan.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, our members have worked to support the Government of Ontario and the people of Ontario. Our members have, amongst other things, ensured the delivery of essential services, the continued operation of the civil and criminal justice systems and the progression of the Government's mandate. They have done so while also navigating the challenges presented by the pandemic and in many cases while working remotely. Even as we recognize the need to return to the physical workplace at least in a hybrid model, our members have proven their ability to work remotely. There is no demonstrable need for a rushed return.

For all of these reasons, we ask you to reconsider the approach announced this week and return to the more gradual approach as set out in the previous GROW plan. That plan was measured and provided checkpoints at which the Employer could recalibrate if needed or proceed if able. The level of detail provided members with confidence in the protocols in place. As above, the current announcement did not.

We have worked with the Employer well over the last two years and we welcome a return to that approach. We share the common goal of keeping our members safe so that they may continue to serve the Government and people of Ontario. It is in furtherance of that goal that we send this letter and urge a more graduated return to the physical workplace.

Best Regards,



Tony Loparco, President
Ontario Crown Attorneys' Association



Jeremy Glick, President
Association of Law Officers of the Crown



Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President
OPSEU/SEFPO



Dave Bulmer, President
AMAPCEO

c.c. Deborah Richardson, Deputy Minister, Treasury Board Secretariat

Marc Rondeau, Associate Deputy Minister, Treasury Board Secretariat