

February 10, 2021

The Honourable Mona Fortier, C.P., M.P.
Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and
Associate Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers:

We are the Chartered Professionals in Human Resources (CPHR) Canada representing 27,000 professionals across nine provinces and three territories. Established in 1994, CPHR Canada is the national voice on the enhancement and promotion of the HR Profession. We advocate for public policy issues that ensure a healthy balance between organizational success and employee well-being contributing to the overall success of the Canadian economy.

CPHR Canada's provincial bodies are the grantors of the CPHR designation in their respective provinces. Together we are responsible for setting and upholding national standards for the profession.

We are pleased to participate in the 2021 federal budget consultations.

Like all Canadians, our members have faced a year of incredible challenges personally and professionally. Our members, who work in organizations of all sizes and throughout many sectors have been on the front line of helping both employers and employees to adapt to new working conditions, personal challenges, and social and economic stress.

Our message to you is shaped by this experience but is not focused solely on the short terms stresses we all face. Over the past few years, we have spoken about how demographic shifts, technological advancements and escalating globalization have been redefining market needs and workplace expectations. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in exponential acceleration of these trends and created major new challenges.

As a result, we are asking that the 2021 budget include significant policy responses to the systemic weaknesses and opportunities that we have witnessed. In short, we want to encourage you to continue to “build back better” for Canada.

Our advice has been shaped by international and domestic consultations. In the last twelve months we have convened a virtual meeting of human resource leaders from around the world followed by a roundtable of Canadian HR professionals. Based on the collective expertise and discussions of these experts, we are asking you to focus on three key areas:

1. Support for policies which continue to promote inclusive, equitable and safe workplaces whether in physical workplaces or remotely located.
2. Efforts to ensure that all Canadians can more readily participate in an increasingly dynamic work force including through universal, accessible affordable child care and access to training that is geared to the current and future needs of employers; and
3. Strengthen the cadre of human resources professionals that will enable the federal government to deliver on its promise to renew the public service and serve Canadians efficiently and with pride in the years to come.

Support for policies which continue to promote inclusive and safe workplaces

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift to working from home, or remotely, and other forms of non-traditional employment such as gig work — and there is no turning back. For example, it is now acknowledged that 40 per cent of all jobs can be done remotely. But non-traditional employment has significant impacts on the nature and organization of businesses and can have important physical, psychological and social repercussions.

These impacts will challenge policy makers and organizational leaders alike to reform our laws, support services and business processes to reflect a massively new reality. This is not a time for incrementalism.

While the field of possible action is large, following are three areas where we believe immediate action can bear fruit.

First, individual Canadians are under significant stress, often without the support provided by traditional workplace environments. The federal government has indicated that it will include mental health as a key component of occupational health and safety in the Canada Labour Code. It will require federally regulated employers to take preventative steps to address workplace stress and injury. We welcome that commitment and strongly believe that through its actions, policies and examples, the federal government can influence and promote a widespread movement to address mental health in the evolving workplace and social space of the future.

Harassment is a second issue that deserves action. According to Statistics Canada, in 2016, nearly one in five (19%) women and approximately one in eight (13%) men reported that they had experienced harassment in the workplace during the past year. Harassment at work is often a significant source of

physical and emotional stress, leading to absenteeism. New information emerging show that one third of workers say they would not be comfortable reporting harassment from a remote environment.¹

Now that the Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations have come into effect, it is important the federal government continue to work with experts, employers and stakeholders on their implementation.

Third, and this is a huge opportunity, remote work can give workers across Canada much greater access to well-paying jobs that were once restricted to those in the large urban centres. But to access these jobs, and so much more, including education and training, Canadians need to be provided with equitable access to high-speed broadband technology.

We believe that the government of Canada must advance its commitment to have all Canadians access high-speed internet. The goal of connecting all Canadians by 2030 needs to be accelerated; this is a clear and present need.

Ensure all Canadians can more readily participate in an increasingly dynamic work force

Access to broadband is not the only barrier Canadians face, of course. We believe the federal government must focus its efforts in ensuring all Canadians can more readily participate in the work force through two initiatives: the provision of universal, accessible affordable child care and access to training that is geared to the current and future needs of employees and employers.

Research shows that women are not only doing more work [both domestic and other] at home, they're also paying for it in terms of their mental and physical health and their earnings. In fact, it is startling to note that the pandemic has pushed women's participation in the labour force down to its lowest level in three decades, with 1.5 million women losing their jobs in the first two months of the recession. The risk of women falling out of the labour force permanently is real unless measures are taken now and the first step is making quality child care universally accessible and affordable from coast-to-coast.

Participation in the changing workforce and a growing productive economy will require ongoing changes and improvements to education and skills development. While unemployment levels created by the pandemic have temporarily alleviated shortages in some areas, employers report there continue to be significant skills shortages in crucial areas.

In a paper we published in March 2020, CPHR Canada pointed out the current extent of labour shortages and factors which need to be addressed. We won't go into detail here but will reiterate our main conclusion and opportunity for significant government action in this budget: Canada needs a comprehensive information system to link training, skills and jobs. In a recent paper, the Institute of Research on Public Policy [IRPP] issued a call to action for employers, training providers and government agencies of all levels to work together to lay the foundation of a robust pan-Canadian mapping of

¹ L'Ordre des CRHA, August 2020 survey

training and employment opportunities. The mapping system would have three interlocking components:

1. A database of training and education programs and providers;
2. A classification system — or “taxonomy” — of skills and other job requirements that reflects how job seekers and employers think and talk about skills; and
3. Linkages that map the training database to skills and other work requirements described in the taxonomy.

Public Service Renewal: Beyond 2020

The pandemic has spotlighted the critical role, dedication and professionalism of Canada’s permanent public service. CPHR Canada applauds their efforts including those of our members who work within governments across Canada.

Within both the public and private sectors, as the labour force has grown in diversity and complexity, and as new laws and systems have been enacted, HR issues have become even more complex. And in the past year human resources professionals have been dealing with the day-to-day issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, reorganizing work arrangements and preparing for re-entry.

In January 2019, the federal government launched the Beyond2020 renewal framework focused on nurturing the core ingredients of innovation: greater inclusion in decision-making, increased organizational agility and the better equipping of public servants with the tools needed to carry out their mission.

Neither recovering from the pandemic nor building the better public service for the future will occur without the continuing input and direction of HR professionals, but they in turn need recognition and world-class support.

CPHR is committed to work with public sector employers across Canada, including the federal government, to support public sector human resource professionals in their ongoing learning and development, including through access to leading edge, innovative practices from Canadian and our global business partners.

A final word

In a recent speech to the Vancouver Board of Trade, Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem observed that the pace of Canada’s recovery will be shaped by its ability to maintain “our biggest asset ... a well-educated and diverse workforce,” drive innovation and productivity growth, boost exports and attract investment. He noted that, with the incoming Biden administration, “Canadian schools and companies may have to fight harder to attract and retain talent.”

We agree.

We have made a number of recommendations in this letter, but we know the job will not end with this budget but requires ongoing concerted efforts. Under the leadership of the federal government, we believe a special task force should be created, composed of business, labour and government representatives. Its role would be inter alia to develop a credible plan to move the economy forward and ensure Canadians have the skills they require for tomorrow's jobs. CPHR Canada would be pleased to support such an initiative.

We thank you for the opportunity to participate in the federal budget consultations. Please contact the undersigned for further information.

Respectfully submitted,



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