

Workplace Safety



Working Together Toward Ensuring Workplace Health and Safety



**The Honourable
Filomena Tassi**
P.C., M.P.
Minister of Labour

Thirty years ago, Canada held its first official National Day of Mourning. Since then, every April 28th, we pay our respects and remember those workers who tragically lost their lives, were injured, or suffered illness while working. We think of those who feel the impact today, their lives forever changed: loved ones, family members, friends, and coworkers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven home the importance of workplace health and safety to workers, unions, and employers. Our government is working hard to provide

a vaccine for everyone who wants one. Tens of thousands of Canadians are getting vaccinated every day.

As Minister of Labour, I'll continue to make sure that workers are secure and protected. We've made many legislative and regulatory changes in the past two years that put workers' safety first. We're ensuring that the Westray provisions of the Criminal Code are properly understood. Criminal conduct resulting in serious injury or death in the workplace will be penalized. Working with the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, we've increased education

on workplace health and safety for workers and employers.

I'm consulting with workers, unions, and employers about making the protection of workers' mental health a part of our occupational health and safety rules. I'm also examining the changing nature of work — the trends of automation, gig work, and the right to disconnect.

Let us remember all workers who have lost their lives or felt the impact of unsafe working conditions. We must continue working together towards ensuring workplace health and safety.

**The Honourable
Monte McNaughton**
MPP for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex & Minister of Labour, Training & Skills Development



There Are No Shortcuts to Health and Safety

My number one priority is for every worker in Ontario to come home to their family after a hard day's work.

Every year, we pause on April 28th to remember relatives, friends, and neighbours who have died or been injured on the job. In 2021, unfortunately, this includes frontline heroes who paid the ultimate price in our fight to defeat COVID-19.

From day one of this pandemic, my ministry has done everything in its power to help keep workers safe. This includes giving workers unlimited job-protected leave so that nobody has to choose between their job and their health.

To date, over 500 health and safety inspectors, along with hundreds of officers from across

the government, have conducted more than 47,000 COVID-19-related inspections and stopped unsafe work 80 times.

When it comes to the well-being of workers, my message is loud and clear: there are no shortcuts to health and safety. Any employer breaking the rules will quickly find an inspector at their door.

And while the pandemic remains front and centre, any type of workplace death is one too many. This is why I continue to work with our labour and industry partners to build a safer future.

We're all on the same team. We have a shared responsibility to keep our workplaces safe now and for the days to come. The best way to honour those we remember today is to pledge to do better tomorrow.

Motivation From the Heart

Trish Penny works in corporate health and safety at Black & McDonald. She's a member and volunteer of Threads of Life — Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support. Trish's older brother Luke died when a wall collapsed and he was crushed while working in a trench. He had just started a new job weather proofing buildings.



Trish Penny
Volunteer
& Family Member,
Threads of Life

What inspired you to enter a career in health and safety?

It wasn't until Luke's passing that I even considered a role in health and safety. I began taking courses when we started court proceedings, as a personal venture to understand a little more about things we may hear during the trial. Once I started the courses it became evident that this was something I could do long-term.

Thinking back on some previous jobs, I couldn't recall any emphasis on worker safety. I felt like it was a gap, and that I could come in with enthusiasm, passion, and a personal understanding to fill that gap.

What was your planned career before this?

I had gone to school to be a hairstylist. I'd been working in a local salon when I started taking my occupational health and safety courses.

What's your personal philosophy of health and safety?

I would say that my personal safety philosophy is to make sure it's relevant. Developing and implementing safety processes that can integrate into operations is very much the goal. I feel like this is achieved by actively listening to the workers, and ensuring that they have input in the development of programs. Collaboration is essential.

How has the pandemic affected your work?

I've been in a corporate health and safety role for almost three years now. This means much less field time or visits to project sites. I'm fortunate to be able to work from home during the pandemic.

We do have many employees who do essential work. They've been continuing to work in various roles, and truly deserve recognition for the work they've done throughout the past year.

What has shifted for me, personally, is the

need for continual updates as new information becomes available. Laws, standards, and requirements in health and safety do change frequently, but the data from COVID-19 (be it recommendations for masking or facial coverings or occupancy requirements) seems to change hourly. It's been a pretty fast-paced year, just making sure we're on top of all the latest information.

Where would you say you are today in your own grief journey?

To be honest, I have to say I'm in a state of limbo at the moment.

It's been almost 11 years since Luke passed away. There have been so many milestones since then that he has missed, and those hurt the most.

I'm currently five months out from my own wedding and the grief of him not being there for that is huge. But, most days I'm good. I have mostly happy memories.

I can't say it gets easier, but you just learn your emotions and triggers and kind of prepare for it.

What did Luke's death teach you (good or bad) about workplace safety?

- #1. New and young workers are so vulnerable. They don't know what they don't know, and even the most confident person may be hesitant to ask questions or request clarification. Employers need to understand that gap and take necessary steps to fill that gap. Ongoing coaching and mentorship go a long way.
- #2. The value of building relationships is imperative to ensuring safety in workplaces. People need to feel like they can speak to their health and safety team without fear of reprisal.
- #3. Supervisors need to understand what their role entails. The role greatly increases your responsibilities when it comes to health and safety. It's important to understand that what you tell people, how you coach them, how you lead them, and what

you allow or don't allow will translate in how they'll work. It's an integral position within any organization.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THREADS OF LIFE.

TRISH PENNY FOUND THREADS OF LIFE THROUGH THE ANNUAL STEPS FOR LIFE FUNDRAISING AND SAFETY AWARENESS EVENT, PICTURED HERE BEFORE THE PANDEMIC.

How did you first learn about Threads of Life?

An ex-girlfriend of Luke's reached out to us about a year after he passed away. She had found Steps for Life (an annual fundraising and awareness event) and thought we may be interested in starting a team and doing the walk. We were able to gather a small group and raise some money (much more than I thought we could!). The walk put us in contact with Threads of Life, and that fall we attended our first forum.

What value do you feel Threads of Life offers for a health and safety professional?

Hearing the stories that Threads of Life members share definitely reinforces the reason why I work in safety. Those true stories are the fundamental reason why I do what I do, and you don't have to have my personal experience with tragedy to feel that commitment. No one should go to work and come home injured, or not come home at all.

Join Trish in a free webinar as she shares her personal experience with workplace tragedy, and learn more about how Threads of Life can support health and safety at threadsof.life.

This article was sponsored by **Threads of Life.**



Prioritizing Safe Workplaces

April 28th marks Canada's Day of Mourning, commemorating those who suffered workplace injuries or have lost their lives due to hazardous workplaces incidents or accidents. In 2019, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board reported 23 deaths while working on injury claims, and 4,873 lost time injuries and illnesses — all within the construction industry alone.

Genevieve Dsouza



David Gardner
Business Manager,
the International
Association of Heat
and Frost Insulators
& Allied Workers
Local 95 Union

Know better and do better

An accident is an event or incident that happens unexpectedly, out of your control. Most workplace injuries, however, aren't accidents because they're preventable. We have the resources, knowledge, and expertise to know better and to do better. Workers are fully trained on job performance and safety measures and are fully aware of the consequences of unsafe work.

Closing the gap

The gap lies in job sites where contractors are more interested in checking off safety boxes than in diligently enforcing safety standards. When deadlines get prioritized,

safety standards take the back seat. This is where discrepancies get built, liabilities are formed, and workers are expected to adhere to unsafe work. When the focus shifts from safety to project completion, workers are the ones taking all the risks to provide contractors with the final rewards. We need to close the gap between safety and deadlines, and shift our belief that we must sacrifice one for the other. We can have both. We can perform our jobs safely without risking our lives and still meet deadlines efficiently. No job is worth a life. Ask questions when unsure and say no to unsafe work. Only then will we start seeing safer job sites, safer workers, and fewer injuries and deaths.

It's all a joke and 'not that serious' until it's you or a close family member laying in a hospital bed, or worse, in a casket. Is the risk really worth it then? You don't think something like this could ever happen to you — until it does. And it changes your life and your family's. Say no. Stand up for your life before you risk losing it.

— David Gardner,
The International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Local 95 Union

This article was sponsored by the **International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Local 95 Union.**



UNIONIZED CONSTRUCTION WORK IS SAFE WORK

BUILDINGS TRADES UNIONS IN ONTARIO'S ICI CONSTRUCTION SECTOR ARE

31% SAFER
WHEN COMPARED TO NON-UNION FIRMS
Source: Institute for Work & Health. 2020. Updating a Study of the Union Effect on Safety in the ICI Construction Sector.

THE UNION EFFECT

Unionization is associated with:



29%
LOWER
incidence of
Critical
Injuries Claims



25%
LOWER
incidence of
Musculoskeletal
Injury Claims



31%
LOWER
incidence of
Lost-time
Injury Claims



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THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS PRESENTED A VARIETY OF CHALLENGES AROUND HEALTH AND SAFETY, BUT IT HAS ALSO RESULTED IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION AMONG THE PEARSON AIRPORT COMMUNITY.

Collaboration for a Safer, Healthier Toronto Pearson

John Ventresca, Associate Director, Safety & Security Quality Assurance, Greater Toronto Airports Authority

Airports are far more than glass, metal, and concrete — they’re distinctly human spaces filled to overflowing with a variety of emotions, experiences, and perspectives. People are the heart and soul of Pearson — its travellers, their friends and families, the communities it serves and, of course, its valued employees. For this reason, health and safety are, above all else, Pearson’s top priorities.

National Day of Mourning is a time to remember those who have lost their lives or experienced illness or injury while on the job. It’s also a day to reaffirm Pearson’s commitment to health and safety, understanding that Pearson, the 400-plus employers at the airport, its union partners, and its workers are on a continuous and collaborative journey to enhance worker health and safety.

“The most fitting way to honour workers across Canada who have lost their lives or been injured on the job is to develop a culture of health and safety that permeates every corner of the airport,” says Kath Hammond, Vice President, General Counsel, Corporate Safety and Security at the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA). “This means having honest conversations, recognizing areas for improvement, and making changes where necessary. It’s also about highlighting past successes, improving on them and amplifying them, in the context of the current environment.”

“Mourning is more than remembering,” says Steven Tufts, Toronto Airport Workers Council (TAWC) spokesperson. “Mourning is a process of paying respect through actions. It means continuing to support Pearson Works! Online, the online resource centre for workers who have lost their jobs during the pandemic. It means establishing a vaccination hub at Pearson to serve airport workers and the surrounding communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19.”

“All over the country, countless dedicated workers before us have paid a price that serves as a reminder of our human frailty,” says Mike Garabedian, Senior Chaplain at Pearson’s Aviation Interfaith Ministry. “Although this is a solemn occasion, we commemorate the National Day of Mourning with a sense of expectation for the present and hope for the future as we reflect together on better things to come.”

The launch of the Healthy Airport initiative

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a variety of challenges around health and safety, but it has also resulted in opportunities for collaboration among the Pearson airport community. In June 2020, Pearson launched its Healthy Airport initiative, a comprehensive program that outlines the steps the airport and its partners are taking to be ready for the new realities of air travel, and to lead the aviation industry in advancing the future of healthy travel corridors.

An airport is a complex environment, and everything from airport security and public safety to employee-customer interactions and day-of operations needed to be considered as part of Healthy Airport. In fact, many of the 400-plus organizations operating out of Pearson have implemented a variety of health and safety measures, and work closely with the GTAA to ensure their employees comply with the Healthy Airport commitment.

Healthy Airport consists of measures such as enhanced cleaning, mandatory mask wearing inside the terminal, and limiting terminal access to employees on duty and same-day travellers. Pearson has also employed a host of innovations, from upgrades to the HVAC system, real-time, publicly-available air quality monitoring, and autonomous cleaning robots to COVID-19 testing pilots, four different applications of UV-C light sanitization, and the installation of plexiglass barriers throughout the airport. These advancements benefit passengers and employees alike, but the airport has also worked closely with its partners to develop a number of COVID-19 responses aimed directly at employees.

Focusing on employees

In addition to conducting airport-wide workforce education sessions at the launch of Healthy Airport, the GTAA has worked with public health officials and a growing number of airport employers to develop a COVID-19 case log. The log is voluntary and provides high-level, depersonalized information about confirmed COVID-19 cases at the airport, with 94 employers currently participating.



Mourning is more than remembering. Mourning is a process of paying respect through actions.

— Steven Tufts, Spokesperson, Airport Workers Council

Earlier this year, the GTAA announced the deployment of 1,000 COVID Safety Alert devices to frontline GTAA employees. These devices were designed to help reinforce physical distancing and rapidly enable workplace contact tracing in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis.

Finally, selected workers at Pearson now have the opportunity to participate in a first-of-its-kind study into the use of

repeated antigen tests to identify COVID-19 in the workplace. Study participants are being asked to take a rapid antigen test two to three times per week, to support an understanding of enhanced safety in group settings like workplaces and further strengthen a science-based approach to COVID-19.

Strength through support

Airport workers have acutely felt the dramatic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, the

GTAA partnered with TAWC to create Pearson Works! Online, a virtual resource centre dedicated to supporting the employee and employer communities at Pearson.

“We’re encouraged with how the GTAA has recognized the impact of COVID-19 on the worker community at Pearson,” says Sean Smith of TAWC. “The future of our airport community will be shaped by our collective response to this unprecedented crisis. Now is the time for us to work together to make the changes needed so that Pearson will remain Canada’s gateway to the world, providing good jobs to anchor the communities where we live.”

“It’s vital that employers and workers continue to collaborate on our efforts against this pandemic so that the airport community can emerge from this crisis stronger, and so that the airport can fulfill its role as an anchor in the new economy for the region,” adds Deborah Flint, President and CEO of the GTAA.

Looking to the future

While the COVID-19 pandemic is anything but predictable, Pearson looks toward a future where a safe and healthy restart of air travel takes place at the right time. When that happens, there will inevitably be new challenges and opportunities with regard to worker health and safety. The GTAA is confident that continued collaboration with all airport partners and an unwavering focus on agility in the collective response will ensure that the health and safety culture at the airport continues to grow and flourish.



Kath Hammond
Vice President, General Counsel, Corporate Safety & Security, Greater Toronto Airports Authority



The most fitting way to honour workers across Canada who have lost their lives or been injured on the job is to develop a culture of health and safety that permeates every corner of the airport.

— Kath Hammond, Vice President, General Counsel, Corporate Safety & Security, Greater Toronto Airports Authority



Steven Tufts
Spokesperson, Toronto Airport Workers Council

This article was sponsored by **Toronto Pearson.**



Scaling Skyscrapers and Suffering in Silence: The Devastating Impact of COVID-19 on Ironworkers

Ironwork is the pillar of modern infrastructure, but its workers suffer alarmingly common workplace injuries and suicides — a situation made worse by the pandemic. Here’s why leaders in the field say the trade is overdue for a serious conversation about mental health.

Liza Agrba

The father of all skyscrapers — the Home Insurance Building in Chicago — was built in 1885 following a series of innovations around structural steel. Ten stories high with a steel skeleton frame and reinforced concrete, the building is widely regarded as a major architectural milestone. It was also among the first structures that gave rise to the ironwork trade — a physically, and psychologically, demanding job that’s been among the world’s most dangerous since its inception, despite being the cornerstone of modern infrastructure.

On this year’s National Day of Mourning — which commemorates those whose lives were forever changed or lost due to workplace injury — Canadians pause to recognize the pandemic’s impact on all workers, and especially those in trades as critically important as they are hazardous.

Aside from the physical stresses of ironworking, the work takes a psychological toll, and like many trades, it has a historically-embedded culture of silence around mental health.

“Many ironworkers work hundreds of feet in the air and don’t want to be known as nervous or scared, since that might be taken as a sign of weakness,” says Jason Roe, Business Manager at Ironworker Local 700. “The typical ironworker sees themselves as having to be tough and thick-skinned. Don’t deal with your problems or emotions, keep them locked up is a common attitude. But asking for help isn’t a sign of weakness.”

Alarming mental health and substance use statistics among ironworkers

Like many trades, the early history of ironworking was marred by lax safety regulations, poor job site conditions, and many resulting injuries and deaths. Thanks to safety innovations and the work of unions like the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers, conditions have improved greatly, but there’s still significant work to be done — especially on the mental health front.

“Currently, we have the highest per capita suicide rate of any construction

trade. And the De Novo Treatment Centre in Ontario, which treats substance abuse in workers in all construction trades, has seen demand for its services roughly doubled during the pandemic,” says Kevin Bryenton, President of the Ontario Ironworkers District Council. “That’s in addition to our already high rate of workplace injuries, which tend to be on the chronic side for ironworkers. We’ve lost a lot of people over the years.”

Shifting workplace culture is key for suicide prevention

Bryenton wants to see conversations about mental health normalized among ironworkers. “It’s my goal to get our membership leaders to have an active conversation about the fact that it’s okay to speak about the stresses you have and to seek help,” he says.

Through their member organizations, ironworkers can access a variety of supports. Most local union health and welfare plans offer confidential, no-cost member assistant programs that offer services like 24-hour call lines, short-and long-term disability, counselling, and legal and financial support services, among others. Mental health coverage has increased in recent years — an effort meant to not only bolster institutional supports, but to encourage conversations about mental health in the field. “We’re trying to get people to start talking about mental health with their coworkers, and to let them know it’s okay to reach out for help,” says Roe.

It’s a major culture shift for a trade built on tightlipped grit, but leaders like Roe and Bryenton — both of whom have decades of fieldwork under their belts — are leading the charge. Their overarching message is that strength can take many forms, including the courage to ask for help. Whether you’re an ironworker, in another construction trade, or a worker in any other field — on this year’s National Day of Mourning, make space to talk about mental health and substance abuse in your workplace.

Their overarching message is that strength can take many forms, including the courage to ask for help.



Jason Roe
Business Manager,
Ironworker Local 700



Kevin Bryenton
President,
Ontario
Ironworkers
District Council

This article was sponsored by the **Ontario Ironworkers District Council**.



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members and
front line
workers.**

**We stand united to honour our Brothers and Sisters who
have been killed, injured, or have suffered illness due to
workplace related hazards and occupational exposure.**

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Feel the Power