



The Honourable Anita Anand
Minister of Public Services and Procurement
Place du Portage, Phase III, Room 18A1
11 Laurier Street
Gatineau QC K1A 0S5
By email: minister@pwgsc.gc.ca

August 19, 2020

Dear Minister Anand,

I am writing today regarding an issue that affects most of the collective membership of the National Joint Council (NJC) Bargaining Agents, the ongoing conversion of federal government workplaces into open offices despite the health threat posed by COVID-19.

The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) has raised this matter on a number of occasions over the past few months. Despite our best efforts, we have been unable to obtain an answer regarding the failure of the Return to Work protocol to take the lessons learned during the pandemic into consideration in the design of future government workplaces.

We have recently received information from our members that the Employer is planning to continue with these conversions in years ahead. In one particularly alarming case, some of them were given a presentation about an upcoming conversion where they were told not to worry because 'only half of you will be in these offices anyway' and "everything will be cleaned regularly so you'll be fine". I find such a cavalier approach entirely inappropriate. In addition, while some Departments have met with our consultation teams on this issue, for the most part we are being informed of their plans and not actually consulted on final designs.

As you may know, PIPSC has come out publicly against these open concepts over the past few years, based on their well-documented health, noise and productivity impacts on employees. We are now additionally concerned that the Employer will use the pandemic as an opportunity to accelerate the reduction of its Real Estate footprint and will attempt to squeeze its employees into ever-smaller open areas. This can only exacerbate future health issues amongst them.

On behalf of the public service employees represented by NJC Bargaining Agents who are or will be affected by these designs, I am asking you to stop the office conversion process until COVID-related health issues have been eradicated from federal workplaces. Planning for future conversions must also include much more rigorous health protocols, as well as meaningful consultations with Bargaining Agents.

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As the Minister Responsible for the Department tasked with designing, implementing and maintaining federal government workplaces, you are uniquely positioned to ensure the ongoing health and safety of hundreds of thousands of Canadians. I urge you to look into this situation as soon as possible.

I thank you for your attention to this very important matter and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debi Daviau', with a stylized, cursive script.

Debi Daviau
President,
The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada

cc: Sandra Hassan, Assistant Deputy Minister Compensation and Labour Relations Sector Treasury
Board of Canada Secretariat
Bill Matthews, Deputy Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Deputy Receiver General
for Canada
Presidents, National Joint Council Bargaining Agents