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**Statement:** *Demands placed on individual workers are balanced with their resources and capacity, and workers have some ability to make decisions in their day-to-day work.*

The Marmot Review highlights the importance of workers having some participatory decision-making over how tasks are done (i.e. job control). It also emphasizes the need to ensure that workers have the resources, supports, and capacity to accomplish tasks and that the quantity and quality of job demands do not result in physical or mental harms for workers. When workers are given demands that are too high and have limited control over how work gets done, it can negatively impact health. For example, research indicates that high demand and low control can cause increased fatigue and exhaustion, depression,<sup>33</sup> nervousness, stress, anxiety, and insomnia.<sup>34</sup> In addition, Marmot's foundational work on the Whitehall Study II found that long-lasting illness and the prevalence of cardiovascular disease are linked to high demand and low control.<sup>35</sup>

New Canadian research emphasizes that a cluster of broader psychosocial work stressors are associated with burnout, stress, and cognitive strain for Canadian workers, including job demands, job control and meaning, as well as co-worker support, supervisor support, justice, trust, and rewards, and job security.<sup>36</sup> This work suggests the importance of comprehensive approaches to understanding and promoting healthy psychosocial work environments, much like the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.

Work-related stress was a significant concern for focus group participants. Participants expressed concern that workers are at risk for exploitation when workers, especially those in precarious jobs, fear losing their job if they say no when the demand is too high or when their task goes beyond their job responsibility. They expressed the impact this can have on one's mental health. For example, one participant said, *"there are often times where your work asks you to do things that go beyond the scope of your role and skills, and this can lead to poor mental health."* Ensuring demands placed on workers match their skill set without overtaxing their resources and capabilities is essential to worker health and well-being. In addition, providing opportunities for participatory decision-making on matters that relate directly to their work such as the timing and place of work and how tasks are done is part of healthy jobs.

## Opportunities for Growth and Development

**Statement:** *All jobs have opportunities for skills training, learning, and promotion prospects.*

Creating opportunities for growth and development make workplaces more equitable by providing equal opportunities for all workers to develop skills that help them reach their full potential.<sup>37</sup> According to research, workers who have opportunities for growth and development are more likely to report higher self-esteem and reduced stress.<sup>38</sup> Research has established the link between self-rated low self-esteem and depressive symptoms,<sup>39</sup> which has significant implications for our health and well-being.

Focus group participants expressed that the feeling of not being able to grow within a company has left workers feeling anxious and depressed. In addition, participants discussed how this impacted workers stress levels because they are forced to always be looking for other jobs. Healthy policies support opportunities for workers' growth and development and promote and sustain a healthy workforce.

## Participatory and Fair Work Culture

**Statement:** *All workers are able to participate in organisational decision-making, have fair processes for resolving conflicts, and are able to share relevant information within their organization.*

Developing a successful and healthy work cultural is essential to ensure fair, equitable, and healthy working conditions. When workers feel like they are treated fairly, their opinions are valued, and they are able to participate in organizational decisions that impact their work they are more likely to be happier, less stressed, and more productive.<sup>40</sup> Research also tells us that a positive organizational culture help make employees feel safe, comfortable, valued, and assisted, which in turn makes them healthier.

Focus group participants stressed the need for fairer processes and recognition so that everyone receives an equal opportunity to be recognized. One participant remarked “*you can only build an*

*ideal work environment if all staff are involved.”* Healthy work cultures are necessary for health, safety, and well-being in all work environments across every sector.

## Discussion and Conclusion

For many Canadians more waking hours are spent at work than anywhere else.<sup>41</sup> However, the nature of work is changing<sup>42</sup> and as a result there is an increase in non-traditional and more precarious forms of work.<sup>43</sup> Developing a framework to guide government and workplace policy and programs and reduce the impacts of unhealthy working conditions on health – during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond – is essential to creating a thriving and healthy work environment and jobs.

Historically, definitions of healthy work have largely focused on occupational injuries and have left out other important aspects that make our working lives healthy or unhealthy. Taking this into consideration, this framework presents a wide range of workplace conditions that consider how the physical, social, economic, and psychological aspects of work come together to either harm or protect our health. This framework is informed by local, national, and international research that helped us present an evidence-based, comprehensive approach to workplace health. However, it is important to note that this is not a blanket framework that applies to all aspects or types of work. Different types of work and workers have different priorities when it comes to their health and well-being in their workplaces. Instead, this framework provides a starting place to adapt for industry or population-specific needs.

Healthy, thriving jobs can be achieved through a range of levers such as stronger protections for workers through provincial and federal employment and labour standards and proactive enforcement, decent equitable wages, benefits and anti-racist, inclusive and safe workplaces from employers, robust collective bargaining agreements that advance healthy working conditions, and universal pharmacare and other benefits. This framework should serve as a tool to support creating the conditions needed for healthy jobs across the GTA as well as add to current policy conversations about the important role work plays in our health.



Good jobs matter for health. A healthy job can also improve productivity and reduce costs related to absenteeism, turnover, workers' compensation, and health costs. Thriving jobs are highly dependent on the policies put in place by government bodies—not just employers. Creating the conditions needed to advance healthy and inclusive work requires a shared responsibility amongst employers, government, unions, employees, and all other workplace stakeholders. By bringing together all workplace stakeholders we can improve the conditions in which we work and better support and promote thriving communities.

## Appendix A: Healthy Work Frameworks Reviewed

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