

***Federal Job Cuts Carried Out by
Psychopathic Bureaucratic Procedures;
Federal Employee Depression Highest Ever***

Ottawa, Ontario – November 16, 2012 -- The federal government should become a model workplace that demonstrates how to contain chronic job stress instead of being a uniquely productive source of this at the expense of the health and well being of its own employees.

In the speech to the annual meeting of the Professional Institute of the Public Services of Canada in Ottawa, Bill Wilkerson, worries that administrative procedures in dealing with the job cuts now underway in Ottawa have become a “psychopathic bureaucracy.’

“I do not mean the federal government is a bureaucracy of psychopaths, to the contrary, there are many decent hard-working people at every level there,” he said. “However, it appears to me that the way the cuts are being handled contradicts the ethical standards that many of the senior public servants in Canada actively represent.”

“I think there “AI” is running the place,” Wilkerson, Co-Founder of the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health, says, referring to the evil computer featured in the classic film, ‘2001, a Space Odyssey.’

He cites the practice of sending so-called “affected letters” to large numbers import of federal employees alerting them that they will be affected by layoffs without specifying who will keep or lose their job.

Wilkerson said “this creates embedded frustration, pervasive uncertainty and even lack of trust between and among coworkers as they await, sometimes for months, word as to who among them will keep or lose their job.”

“At a time of serious uncertainty, dragging out the cuts process and doing so in a manner which imposes upon employees all the same demand of their jobs is a cruel form of management.

“In the federal workplace, managers must learn to motivate not disintegrate the cognitive capacities of employees and learn how to exercise fairness and common sense when carrying out the very difficult decisions of expensive job cuts.

“By any measure, Lay-offs should be conducted with a clear regard for human dignity, decency and a right to know. Dragging out this process out in this way is bad for both those who lose their jobs and those who remain behind.”

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Through interviews he has conducted with deputy ministers and senior civil servants and personal consultations with lower-level government ploys he feels the entire organization is frustrated by how things are done yet even senior decision-makers are at a loss how to change this.

Wilkerson said he felt one of the contributing factors was the lack of attention or commitment by cabinet ministers to their duties as an employer. "Ministers don't behave like employers, don't see themselves as employers, and this is one of the reasons that federal civil public servants have been stigmatized by their own employer.

Wilkerson points out that "the federal government spends hundreds of billions dollars a year for mental health research, programs, health services, health benefits for its employees and disability insurance and then compromises that huge investment by creating a workplace which represents a health risk to tens of thousands of people."

"Chronic job stress is not simply a cost of doing business," Wilkerson said, "BUT is often the 1st turn in a long road to the loss of life. Chronic job stress migrates to burnout, rumination and employee isolation, all predictors of depression.

And he said, "depression kills -- in the form of suicide, accelerated risk for fatal heart attacks, strokes among women. " Chronic job stress is a bona fide workplace hazards in this modern society and the federal workplace in Ottawa is one of the darkest lights on the horizon."

In the federal workplace, nearly half of all those federal employees disabled by illness or injury are off work due to depression.

It could be different. Wilkerson says, the original vision for public service renewal federally held great promise but has certainly been lost.

He visualized, however, one day, the government of Canada -- the countries largest employer -- building a mental health compact for its people and in doing so set the standard for enlightened workplace management.

"When the Mental Health Commission of Canada comes out with its national standard for a psychologically healthy workplace, could not the government of Canada and other public-sector employers become the early sites for piloting the standards and improving upon them, serving as leaders by example."