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MANITOBA TO HARMONIZE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REGULATIONS WITH OTHER PROVINCES

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Reducing Trade Barriers, Keeping Worker Protection at the Forefront: Pallister

Manitoba has become the first province to harmonize occupational safety and health regulations in several key areas to reduce barriers to interprovincial trade and increase labour mobility, while maintaining protections for workers, Premier Brian Pallister announced today following a meeting of Provincial and Territorial Trade Ministers in Montreal today.

Growth, Enterprise and Trade Minister Blaine Pedersen attended the meeting as well as a followup meeting of the Committee on Internal Trade, which included the federal government.

“This past July, I welcomed a commitment made by all provinces and territories to take meaningful action to address common regulatory hurdles and reduce trade barriers within their control,” said Pallister. “Manitoba is leading the charge. The changes we are implementing will remove obstacles to interprovincial and make it easier for individuals to work across Canada.”

The amendments to The Workplace Safety and Health Regulation include:

- updating first-aid kits and first-aid certifications in accordance with newly developed Canadian Standards Association standards as part of a national system for workplace first aid;
- extending baseline hearing test requirements from within 70 days of hire to up to six months and replace annual hearing reports with requirements to report every two years;
- clarifying existing requirements for the provision and use of several types of personal protective equipment including high-visibility safety apparel, hearing protection, life

jackets and personal flotation devices; and

- ensuring a secondary air supply is carried on the person or within arm's reach for workers working in dangerous atmospheres.

In addition to taking steps toward reconciliation of several interprovincial trade barriers identified by the Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, the changes also meet harmonization recommendations of the Occupational Safety and Health of the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation, a cross-jurisdictional advisory and consultative body respecting shared issues relating to occupational safety and health.

These changes will enable alignment with accepted practices and requirements in other provinces, and deliver on our commitment to harmonize approaches to break down barriers, the premier said.

At the premiers' meeting this past July, Manitoba and Nova Scotia agreed to lead further work by provincial and territorial trade ministers to make meaningful progress on reducing internal trade barriers and red tape in the areas of occupational health and safety, transportation, agriculture and business registration. Manitoba's commitment on occupational health and safety harmonization advances one of these priorities and progress is being made on other fronts.

For more information on the amendments, please visit the Workplace Safety and Health FAQ webpage at http://www.manitoba.ca/labour/safety/wsh_faqs.html