

Ontario

LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Immigration

Jan 23: In response to Ottawa's decision to further reduce the number of international students allowed to study in Canada, Ontario said it will continue to prioritize public postsecondary programs that help prepare graduates for in-demand jobs, including hospitality, manufacturing, automotive and dentistry. Ontario expects to issue 116,740 student permits in 2025, including 32,579 for master's and doctoral degree programs.

Action Point: Find out about the 10 things employers [need to know about hiring temporary foreign workers](#).

Employment Standards

Jan 1: Newly effective changes to ESA [regulations](#) require the Ontario MOL to keep a public record on its website listing the following information about each licensed temporary help agency in the province: i. the city or town, province or state and country of its business address; ii. its business email address; and iii. its business telephone number.

Employment Benefits

Jan 1: New Ontario [pension regulations](#) require certain jointly sponsored pension plans (JSPPs) to meet a 90% going concern funding threshold to qualify for a permanent exemption from solvency funding concerns test requirements. The new rules also eliminate the requirement that JSPPs disclose the plan's transfer ratio in periodic pension statements.

Training

Jan 27: With the threat of U.S. trade tariffs on Canadian goods looming, Ontario announced that it's investing an additional \$100 million in the province's Skills Development Fund Training Stream, bringing the total provincial investment in the SDF to \$1.5 billion. The money will go to training workers in manufacturing, construction, critical mineral extraction and other critical skilled trades.

New Laws

Dec 19: Ontario announced that it will provide \$30 million to 374 municipal fire departments across the province to support cancer prevention initiatives over the next 3 years. The money will be used to purchase equipment and upgrade infrastructure to reduce the long-term effects of exposure to fire-related contaminants and chemicals. In Canada, 50 to 60 firefighters die of cancer every year.

and half of those are from Ontario.

New Laws

Jan 28: To bolster support for farmers and the agri-food sector, Ontario announced that it's increasing annual funding for its Risk Management Program from \$150 million to \$250 million. The \$100 million increase will be phased in over a 3-year period, starting with a \$30 million increase for the 2025 program year, leading to an annual total of \$250 million by the 2027 program year. Producer premiums will remain at 35% of government funding.

Health & Safety

Jan 1: New [OHS regulations](#) require that menstrual products, including both tampons and menstrual pads, be provided at Ontario construction projects expected to last 3 months or more where 20 or more workers are regularly employed. Such products must be in one or more location if necessary to ensure that each worker has a reasonably private location in which to use them.

Action Point: Find out [how to create a vibrant workplace health and safety culture](#) at your company.

Workers' Comp

Mar 31: That's the deadline for Ontario Schedule 1 employers to submit their workers' comp payroll reports listing their actual 2024 costs and projected costs for 2025 to the WSIB to avoid potential late fees, interest and penalties.

CASES

Overtime: Union Employee Entitled to Overtime Premium for Agreeing to Shift Change

Citing language from the collective agreement, the union claimed that a nursing home had to pay an overtime premium for requesting that a full-time employee working a 10-shift per pay period work on a day off, in exchange for a different day off. The employer argued that the provision was intended to allow for a simple work schedule change without the need to pay overtime for the day off worked. The Ontario arbitrator upheld the grievance, finding that an overtime premium is payable when an employee's assigned workday is changed at the employer's request, and the employee agrees [[Grace Villa Nursing Home v Service Employees International Union, Local 1 Canada](#), 2025 CanLII 1492 (ON LA), January 14, 2025].

Action Point: Find out about the [10 most common overtime mistakes](#) Canadian companies make and what you must do to avoid them.

Discrimination: Philosophical Disagreement with Mandatory Vaccination Isn't a Creed

Coca Cola implemented a policy requiring employees either to get the COVID

vaccine or wear a mask and submit to regular rapid testing for the virus. An employee who got fired for refusing to accept either option sued the company for discrimination on the basis of creed. The Ontario Human Rights Tribunal dismissed the complaint. Protection against creed requires a person to have an overarching system of beliefs. The employee's asserted creed—bodily autonomy and sovereignty—wasn't such a system of beliefs but simply "personal preferences and singular beliefs based on a philosophical disagreement as to the propriety of the vaccine policy in question" [[Buckwheat v. Coca-Cola Canada Bottling Limited](#), 2025 HRT0 101 (CanLII), January 15, 2025].

Action Point: Find out how to avoid discrimination when [enforcing a mandatory vaccination policy](#).

Return To Work: Injured Worker Couldn't Do Job but Employer Should've Communicated Better

The union had no complaints about how the hospital sought to accommodate the part-time cleaner the first 2 times she had to take leave due to a work injury. It grieved because the hospital didn't do the same thing on the third occasion where she had to miss work as a result of the third injury, which was less severe and not work-related. The hospital should have held return-to-work meetings like it did on the first 2 occasions, the union complained. The Ontario arbitrator tossed the claim, noting that the evidence showed "beyond any doubt" that the worker was incapable of performing the essential duties of her position through no fault of her own. But the arbitrator hit the hospital with \$600 in general damages for not doing a better job of communicating, including failing to have return-to-work meetings [[Unity Health v Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 5441](#), 2025 CanLII 119 (ON LA), January 3, 2025].

Action Point: Find out how to implement a legally sound [return to work policy](#) for injured workers.