

# Ontario

## LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Privacy

Jan 21: Ontario's Privacy Commissioner and Human Rights Commission released joint [Principles](#) to help companies and organizations develop, deploy, and use AI systems responsibly. The Principles provide "a clear roadmap" for ensuring that AI systems are fair, transparent, accountable, and compliant with human rights and privacy laws.

**Action Point:** Find out how to guard against AI privacy, discrimination, and other liability risks by implementing a legally sound [workplace artificial intelligence use policy](#).

### Employment Benefits

Feb 2: FSRA finalized [Guidance](#) explaining how it will implement new target benefit multi-employer pension plans legislation, including with regard to: i. reviewing applications to convert defined benefits to target benefits; ii. assessing whether a plan's Provision for Adverse Deviation is aligned with its funding and benefits policy; and iii. supervising plans that provide target benefits through regular reviews, risk assessments, and ongoing engagement with plan administrators.

### New Laws

Jan 31: The federal government announced that it's investing \$7.5 million through the [Strategic Response Fund](#) (SRF) to help paper mill Kap Paper Inc. complete a Front End Engineering Design study on the feasibility of creating a new medium-density fibreboard facility in Kapuskasing, Ontario, that would directly employ about 240 workers.

### Training

Feb 9: Ontario will invest \$30 million in a new primary care healthcare workforce upskill program in partnership with Conestoga College, Lakehead University, Trent University, and Western University. The money will be used to upskill over 1,400 registered nurses for primary care, create 170 primary care nurse practitioner education seats, and add up to 150 physician assistant education seats.

### New Laws

Mar 2: Comments closed on new "Buy Ontario" public procurement [regulations](#) authorizing provincial government agencies, municipalities, and local boards to give preference to Ontario companies in awarding contracts for light duty fleet vehicles and major infrastructure construction projects.

**Action Point:** Keep in mind that while it may work as a government trade policy, "buying Ontario" or "[buying Canadian](#)" is a form of [illegal national origin employment discrimination](#) when it's applied to deciding who to hire, fire, demote, etc.

## Drugs & Alcohol

March 1 is the deadline [to comment](#) on proposed regulations to bar public consumption of illegal substances by allowing police officers and provincial enforcement officials to arrest individuals who don't comply with orders to stop using the substances or leave the public space. Only special constables are allowed to issue such orders under current laws.

## Mental Stress

Feb 4: The Ontario WSIB finalized its new [policy \(15-03-13\)](#) implementing recent workers' comp legislative changes that extend presumptive coverage for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to include wildland firefighters and wildland fire investigators. The coverage extension was included in the *Working for Workers Five Act of 2024*.

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement an effective workplace [mental health policy](#) for your employees.

## Workers' Compensation

March 31: March 31 is the deadline for Ontario Schedule 1 employers to submit their workers' comp payroll reports listing their actual 2025 costs and projected costs for 2026 to the WSIB to avoid potential late fees, interest and penalties. Keep in mind that employers who fail to pay workers' compensation premiums are now also subject to administrative monetary penalties.

**Action Point:** Look up the [2026 workers' compensation premium rates](#) in each part of Canada.

## CASES

### Labour Relations: High Court Upholds Legislation Ending 2017 Teachers' Strike

In 2017, Ontario enacted Bill 178 ending a five-week strike by faculty and full-time academic employees at the province's 24 colleges of applied arts and technology. The union asked the court to declare Bill 178 a violation of employees' Charter rights to strike but the judge said no. Now the province's top court has ruled that the legislation did, in fact, substantially interfere with union members' strike rights but that the government was justified in doing so. The Court of Appeal cited Section 1 of stating that Charter guaranteed rights and freedoms are subject "to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society." Ending the strike served a "substantial and pressing" need and enacting Bill 178 accomplished that objective in a reasonable way that minimized and offset the impairment of the employees' strike rights. The Court also ordered the union to pay \$50,000 in legal costs [[Ontario Public Service Employees Union v. Ontario \(Attorney General\)](#), 2026 ONCA 74 (CanLII), February 6, 2026].

### Drugs & Alcohol: Safety-Sensitive Worker Who Smoked Pot on Lunch Break Keeps His Job

A utility operator at a metal spraying facility got fired for returning to his safety-sensitive work high after smoking pot during his lunch break and then showing f-

bomb insolvency to the supervisor who told him he was suspended pending investigation of his marijuana use. The operator had been disciplined twice before, including a suspension for smoking what may have been marijuana in a no-smoking area. The Ontario arbitrator found just cause for discipline based on the supervisor's credible testimony that the operator's smelling like marijuana. But it reduced the penalty to a three-month suspension, without backpay, citing the operator's nine years of employment, productivity, acceptance of responsibility, and the fact that there was no actual safety injury or incident [[MSC Toronto O/a Continuous Colour Coat Limited v United Steelworkers Local 3950-65](#), 2026 CanLII 6010 (ON LA), January 30, 2026].

**Action Point:** *MSC* illustrates the difficulties employers face in proving that an employee used drugs at work. While they might have been enough in this case, smelling of and past use of marijuana aren't nearly as powerful evidence as a positive drug test. Find out [how to create a legally sound drug testing policy](#) at your workplace and get a template policy you can adapt for your own situation.