

# Month In Review – Ontario



## LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### OHS Enforcement

Jan 3: The MOL published new OHS [regulations](#) setting the administrative monetary penalty amount for public procurement contracts. Amounts for other offences will be added later. The regulations also list the information the MOL must put in a Notice of AMP and how employers can appeal. They also authorize the agency to publish the names of violators.

**Action Point:** Find out about the current [Administrative Monetary Penalty rules](#) for OHS violations across Canada.

### OHS Program

Jan 3: The MOL published OHS [regulations](#) implementing the new requirement that project owners (or those acting on their behalf) that require a CPO-accredited Health and Safety Management System (HSMS) as a part of their procurement process for public infrastructure construction projects to accept all CPO-accredited HSMSs as equal.

### Cold Stress

Dec 15: With temperatures dropping, the MOL reminded employers and outdoor workers to be aware of and take measures to guard

against cold stress hazards.

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement a complete, compliant and effective [Cold Stress Compliance Game Plan](#) at your workplace.

## Noise Hazards

Jan 30: That's the last day to comment on [proposed changes](#) to WSIB workers' compensation hearing loss coverage rules (Policy 16-01-04, Noise-Induced Hearing Loss). Highlights: i. Make 26.25 dB loss the minimum threshold for initial entitlement to align with permanent impairment requirements; ii. Remove the presbycusis (aging) deduction factor; and iii. Clarify that the noise exposure threshold (NET) is 90 dBA exposure for 5 years, or the equivalent.

**Action Point:** Find out how to use the OHSI [Noise Control & Hearing Conservation Program template](#) to protect your workers from hazardous noise exposure.

## First Aid

Jan 1: The WSIB began accepting [applications](#) for automated external defibrillator reimbursement under new OHS rules making AEDs mandatory at construction project sites expected to last at least 3 months that have 20 or more workers. Reimbursement will cover up to \$2,500 of one AED purchased between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2027 per eligible construction site. Deadline to apply: July 31, 2027.

**Action Point:** Find out more about the [new Ontario AEDs regulations](#) and how to implement an [AEDs Compliance Game Plan](#) to save lives at your workplace.

## New Laws

Dec 31: Newly effective free trade and labour mobility (aka "As Of Right") [regulations](#) provide for recognition of goods

and services from other Canadian jurisdictions that have enacted mutuality legislation recognizing Ontario goods and services within their own boundaries. Recognition means that the goods and services can be sold within the reciprocating jurisdiction without further testing, regulatory approvals or fees. The new regulations specify that in the event the free trade regulations conflict with other Ontario regulations, the free trade rules will prevail.

## Emergency Response

Dec 19: This year, the Ontario [Fire Protection Grant](#) will provide \$20 million in funding to 380 municipal fire departments across the province to support firefighter health and safety, expand cancer prevention initiatives and improve emergency response to lithium-ion battery related incidents.

## Transportation Safety

Dec 29: Comments closed on a proposal to impose a lifetime licence suspension for anyone convicted of dangerous driving causing death. The dangerous driving legislation would also authorize the police to immediately suspend the licence and impound the vehicle of persons driving dangerously while increasing the penalties for driving with a suspended licence. Minimum fines for speed limiter offences on commercial vehicles would also increase from \$250 to \$1,000, including operating a commercial vehicle without a functioning speed limiter.

**Action Point:** Find out how far you can go in [disciplining workers for distracted and dangerous driving](#).

## New Laws

Dec 11: Royal Assent for [Bill 72](#), the *Buy Ontario Act*, giving the provincial government authority to require public sector entities to give preference to Ontario or Canadian providers

of goods and services when awarding government contracts. The new legislation applies to all public sector organizations, including municipalities, as well as contractors and subcontractors.

## Training

Dec 15: Ontario is investing \$2.6 million to enable Skills Ontario to add 2 more mobile learning hub trucks by August 2026. Equipped with simulators and state-of-the-art learning tools, the augmented 6-truck fleet will travel across the province offering hands-on training to an additional 75,000 young Ontarians seeking to break into the skilled trades.

## Training

Jan 19: That's the deadline to comment on a new MOL [proposal](#) exploring different approaches to increase apprenticeship training and job opportunities on government-funded infrastructure projects. The policy objective is to use the government procurement process to ensure a steady pipeline of skilled workers to support Ontario's ambitious infrastructure plan.

## Training

Dec 9: [Private Member Bill 88](#), which has passed First Reading, requires holders of liquor licences and permits to implement mandatory sexual violence and harassment training programs for sales, security, supervisory, and other key personnel. It would also amend the *OHS Act* to provide for required workplace violence and harassment certification training beyond current OHS training requirements.

## Industry Challenges

Dec 12: Ontario officially launched its new Critical Minerals Processing Fund (CMPF), which will provide \$500 million to

support strategic projects that accelerate the province's critical minerals processing capacity and strengthen domestic supply chains. Companies interested in CMPF funding should check the [Invest Ontario](#) website. Ontario's critical minerals supplies includes the vast reserves found in the Ring of Fire, an area almost 5,000 square kilometres located about 500 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay.

## **New Laws**

Dec 17: For the third straight year, the federal government cut Ontario's Provincial Attestation Letters allocation of international students, this time by 42% to 104,780, with a cap of 70,074 international student permits. Ontario will continue to prioritize publicly assisted colleges and universities, who will get 96% of the allocations, while the remaining 4% go to language schools, private universities and other institutions. Starting this year, master's and doctoral students applying to public colleges and universities will be exempt from the PAL requirement but will be included in overall cap allocation. Graduate students applying to private institutions will continue to be subject to PAL requirements.

## **Workers' Compensation**

Mar 31: March 31<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for Ontario Schedule 1 employers to submit their workers' compensation 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' comp premiums are now also subject to administrative monetary penalties.

**Action Point:** Find out how much each province and territory is charging for [workers' compensation premiums in 2026](#).

## Workers' Compensation

Dec 9: The Ontario Assembly tabled but will unlikely pass [Private Member Bill 86](#), an ambitious proposal to repeal the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997* and replace it with a whole new fair compensation system called the *Meredith Act*.

## Environmental

Jan 1: [New regulations](#) establish the criteria that Ontario will use to designate Special Economic Zones, or geographic regions where critical minerals and other strategic projects essential to the province's economic future can be undertaken under minimal, streamlined, and expedited regulatory approval processes and rules.

## Environmental

Dec 18: The Governments of Canada and Ontario finalized a "one project, one review" cooperation agreement under which major projects subject to federal and provincial environmental assessment regulations will only have to undergo a single review using the Ontario assessment process in which provincial regulators will incorporate federal interests. The agreement also includes a side deal requiring the Agency to complete its current assessment of the roads to the Ring of Fire by June 2026.

**Action Point:** Find out more about [federal-provincial one project, one review environmental assessment agreements](#) and how they work.

## Environmental

Feb 3: That's the final day of Ontario Ministry of Environment public consultations on a [proposal](#) to exempt proponents from having to get Environmental Compliance Approvals, Permits to

Take Water and other government environmental permissions for certain “low-risk” projects.

## Environmental

Dec 10: [Private Member Bill 90](#) would add a new provision giving the government 3 months to launch a review to come up with a plan for including textiles as a designated class of material for which brand holders must carry out environmental waste responsibilities under the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016*. The plan would then be due within 6 months after the review begins.

## CASES

### Fall Protection: Use of Stepstools Doesn't Justify Lack of Ladder Safety Training

An MOL inspector ordered Starbucks to provide workers ladder safety training after observing elevated shelving units at its stores. Starbucks appealed the order, arguing that ladder training wasn't necessary because workers use a “stepstool” of less than 800 mm in height to access the shelves for which they receive safety instruction. But the Ontario Labour Relations Board upheld the order, giving deference to the inspector's view that the step-stool was a “ladder” for which training is required under OHS regulations [[Starbucks Coffee Canada Inc. v A Director under the OHS Act, and Brenden Laframboise](#), 2025 CanLII 133972 (ON LRB), December 19, 2025].

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement an effective [Portable Ladder Safety Compliance Game Plan](#) to prevent fall injuries.

## Privacy: Union Fights Mandatory Monitoring Software on Workers' Personal Cellphones

The union drew first blood in its bid to block Queen's University from unilaterally requiring faculty to install third-party "Endpoint" software on any personal cellphones, computers, or tablets used for work. The union claims the policy is an invasion of privacy; the University says it's essential to ensure transparency. The Ontario arbitrator sided with the union and ordered the University to reimburse faculty members for buying and installing the software; stage 2 will unfold 30 days later when the arbitrator decides whether the new policy is an unreasonable abuse of management authority and violation of faculty members' privacy [[\*Queen's University v Queen's University Faculty Association\*](#), 2025 CanLII 114185, November 7, 2026].

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement a [legally sound video surveillance policy](#) to ensure safety in vehicles and at your workplace without violating workers' privacy rights in the process.

## Workplace Harassment: Masturbating in Back Seat of Uber Driver's Car Is Just Cause to Terminate

A roofing contractor paid for Uber to drive an employee returning to modified duties from a work injury to and from work each day. But the Return-To-Work took an unexpected turn when the company fired the employee for sexually harassing the Uber driver, accusing him of making inappropriate comments about the driver's appearance and masturbating in the back seat of her car. The union acknowledged the first charge, while insisting that the comments didn't amount to sexual harassment, and denied the second. After hearing from both,



the Ontario arbitrator found the driver's testimony more credible and in line with Uber's own internal records. Having concluded that the employee did masturbate, there was no need to analyze the employee's alleged comments in upholding termination for sexual harassment [[\*Sheet Metal Workers' International Association, Local 30 v Semple Gooder Roofing Corporation\*](#), 2025 CanLII 132377 (ON LA), December 18, 2025].

**Action Point:** Don't assume workers will tell you if they're being harassed. Use the OHS Insider [Assessment Questionnaire template](#) to uncover hidden harassment, bullying, and stalking problems at your workplace.

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