

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES WORKPLACE REFORM LEGISLATION

Posted on May 31, 2017

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In a recent article, [Changing Workplaces Review Recommends Significant Changes to Ontario's Labour and Employment Laws](#), we provided readers with a summary of the most notable proposed changes to Ontario's *Employment Standards Act, 2000* and the *Labour Relations Act, 1995*, recommended in the final report of the Changing Workplaces Review. The report is the first-ever independent review of these acts.

The Ontario Premier championed the report in a press conference held on May 30, 2017, and announced new proposed legislation, *The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017*, which adopts many of the broad-ranging changes recommended in the report. These changes include:

1. Increasing general minimum wage to \$14 per hour on January 1, 2018, and then to \$15 on January 1, 2019, followed by annual increases at the rate of inflation. At present, Ontario's minimum wage is \$11.40 per hour.
2. Mandating equal pay for part-time, temporary, casual and seasonal employees doing the same job as full-time employees; and equal pay for temporary help agency employees doing the same job as permanent employees at the agencies' client companies. If the proposed legislation passes, this proposal would come into force on April 1, 2018.
3. Expanding personal emergency leave to include an across-the-board minimum of at least two paid days per year for all workers. If the proposed legislation passes, this proposal would come into force on January 1, 2018.
4. Bringing Ontario's vacation into line with the national average by ensuring at least three weeks' of paid vacation after five years with a company. If the proposed legislation passes, this proposal would come into force on January 1, 2018.
5. Making employee scheduling fairer, including requiring employees to be paid for three hours of work if their shift is cancelled within 48 hours of its scheduled start time. If the proposed legislation passes, this proposal would come into force on January 1, 2019.

The province announced plans to hire up to 175 more employment standards officers and launch a program to educate both employees and small and medium-sized businesses about their rights and obligations under the

Employment Standards Act, 2000.

Once the new employment standards officers are hired by 2020-2021, the Employment Standards program will aim to resolve all claims filed within 90 days and inspect 1 in 10 Ontario workplaces.

These new resources are aimed to ensure that the proposed changes under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* are fully and effectively implemented.

However, before the new legislation is enacted into law, it will proceed through the regular legislative process. This process includes a first, second, and third reading in the House of Commons before the Legislative Assembly. The new legislation has yet to be introduced in the House for first reading.

We will continue to publish updates on specific topics covered by the legislation, and will provide further news about implementation. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact any member of McMillan's Employment and Labour Relations group if you have any questions regarding the report or the proposed new legislation.

by Stefanie Di Francesco

A Cautionary Note

The foregoing provides only an overview and does not constitute legal advice. Readers are cautioned against making any decisions based on this material alone. Rather, specific legal advice should be obtained.

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