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Ontario provincial legislation guide

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Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion

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Introduction

This guide provides a brief overview of key employment, health and safety, privacy, and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) legislation in Ontario. For each piece of legislation, we outline why it is important to employers and how it relates to DEIA, who and what it applies to, the latest date of amendment, the key requirements for employers (highlighting how the legislation specifically affects workplace practices), and the penalties for non-compliance. This guide is intended for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

We encourage organizations to use this guide as a starting point for understanding their obligations under the law. However, this guide is not exhaustive, and there are details, exceptions, and nuances in the legislation that require further reading or consultation to fully understand and apply. Additionally, while the information and links provided are accurate at the time of publication, this guide is not updated with every legislative change. Users should review the relevant legislation to confirm current requirements.

While compliance with the law is the baseline, we also recommend that organizations go beyond compliance where possible, proactively building workplaces that prioritize safety, inclusion, and equity in policies, practices, and culture.

Note that this resource covers legislation specific to one province or territory. A Canadian federal legislation guide is also available.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Why this legislation matters

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) establishes standards aimed at identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for people with disabilities.

Applies to

- All organizations in Ontario, including public, private, and non-profit organizations, as well as provincial and municipal government bodies.

Latest amendment

- 2016/12/14

Requirements for employers

- AODA sets out accessibility standards that organizations must follow to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. Employers must:
 - Ensure accessible recruitment, hiring, and employment practices, including providing accommodation when needed.
 - Provide workplace accommodations, including individualized accommodation and return-to-work processes.
 - Provide accessible workplace information upon request.
 - Provide accessible emergency information and develop a plan to help any employee with a disability during an emergency.
 - For organizations with 50+ employees: maintain written accessibility policies, accommodation plans, multi-year accessibility plans, and compliance reporting.

Penalties for non-compliance

- Organizations can face significant daily fines for non-compliance (up to \$100,000 per day for corporations and \$50,000 per day for individuals).
- Individuals may be held personally liable if they fail to prevent non-compliance.
- Enforcement can also include inspections, compliance orders, and administrative penalties.

Further reading

- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#)
- [Accessible workplaces](#), Government of Ontario

Employment Standards Act

Why this legislation matters

The Employment Standards Act (ESA) provides the legal foundation for fair, consistent, and equitable treatment of employees.

Applies to

- Most employers and employees in Ontario, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and casual workers.
- Some roles and industries are exempt or have special rules (for example, certain professionals or federally regulated workers).

Latest amendment

- 2025/11/26

Requirements for employers

- The ESA establishes minimum standards for key employment conditions, such as:
 - Wages and pay practices
 - Hours of work and overtime
 - Vacation and public holidays
 - Leaves of absence (e.g., maternity or other job-protected leaves)
 - Termination and severance
 - Protections for young workers
- Employers cannot penalize employees for exercising their rights under the ESA.
- Employees cannot waive their rights under the ESA.

Penalties for non-compliance

- Monetary penalties and, in serious cases, criminal charges.
- Repayment to employees for unpaid wages, overtime, or vacation pay.
- Orders to reinstate employees.
- Enforcement actions including inspections and compliance orders.

Further reading

- [Employment Standards Act](#)
- [Your guide to the Employment Standards Act](#), Government of Ontario

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Why this legislation matters

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) governs access to public-sector records and the collection, use, and protection of personal information. Its purpose is to promote transparency, accountability, and privacy protection.

Applies to

- Ontario provincial government ministries and many provincial agencies, boards, commissions, higher education institutions, and hospitals.

Latest amendment

- 2025-11-2

Requirements for employers

- For public-sector employers, FIPPA governs how they collect, use, store, and disclose employee information. For example, employers must:
 - Protect personal information and limit how it's collected, used, and shared.
 - Respond to employee requests to access or correct their personal information within required timelines.
 - Inform individuals about how their information is used and comply with record-keeping and retention rules.

Penalties for non-compliance

- The Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) can investigate complaints and issue binding orders to correct non-compliance.
- Willful breaches (such as improper disclosure, destruction of records, or obstructing access requests) can result in fines up to \$5,000.

Further reading

- [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)
- [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Manual](#), Government of Ontario

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Why this legislation matters

The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) governs access to information and privacy in Ontario's municipal sector. Its purpose is to support transparency, accountability, and privacy protection at the local government level.

Applies to

- Local government institutions, including municipalities, police services boards, school boards, conservation authorities, boards of health, and transit commissions.

Latest amendment

- 2024-03-31

Requirements for employers

- MFIPPA governs how municipal-sector employers collect, use, store, and disclose employee information. Employers must:
 - Protect personal information and limit how it's collected, used, and shared.
 - Respond to employee requests to access or correct their personal information within required timelines.
 - Maintain proper records, follow retention rules, and comply with investigations or orders from the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Penalties for non-compliance

- The Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) can investigate complaints and issue binding orders to correct non-compliance.
- Willful violations (e.g., unauthorized disclosure, destruction of records, obstructing access requests) can lead to fines up to \$5,000 per offence.

Further reading

- [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)
- [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Manual](#), Government of Ontario

Occupational Health and Safety Act

Why this legislation matters

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) establishes the framework for workplace health and safety in the province. It ensures that everyone in the workplace knows their rights and responsibilities to maintain a safe and healthy environment. Importantly, the OHSA includes obligations to maintain a workplace free from violence and harassment.

Applies to

- Most workers, supervisors, employers, and workplaces in Ontario, as well as constructors, workplace owners, and suppliers serving OHSA-regulated workplaces.

Latest amendment

- 2025-11-26

Requirements for employers

- Identify and control hazards, maintain equipment, and ensure safe work practices.
- Provide health and safety training, instruction, and supervision to workers.
- Develop workplace health and safety policies, programs, and procedures as required.
- Report workplace injuries, illnesses, and critical incidents to the Ministry and investigate as required.
- Work with joint health and safety committees (JHSC) or worker health and safety representatives.
- Ensure workers are informed of their rights, including the right to know about hazards, the right to participate, and the right to refuse unsafe work.

Penalties for non-compliance

- Fines up to \$500,000 for individuals, up to \$1,500,000 for directors/officers, up to \$2,000,000 for corporations, and/or up to 12 months imprisonment where applicable.
- The Ministry of Labour can issue stop-work orders requiring hazards to be corrected.
- Non-compliance can also lead to operational disruption and increased scrutiny.

Further reading

- [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act \(OHSA\)](#), Government of Ontario
- [Guide to the Occupational Health and Safety Act](#), Government of Ontario

Ontario Human Rights Code

Why this legislation matters

The Ontario Human Rights Code ensures that all Ontarians have equal rights and protection from discrimination in key areas of daily life. Specifically, the Code prohibits discrimination based on [protected grounds](#) in several key areas of employment.

Applies to

- Anyone who provides goods, services, housing, employment, or membership opportunities in Ontario, including:
 - All employers, service providers, landlords, and organizations.
 - Both public and private sectors, including businesses, non-profits, unions, and government bodies.
 - Employees, volunteers, tenants, and members of the public.

Latest amendment

- 2025-06-30

Requirements for employers

- Take steps to prevent harassment or discrimination in the workplace.
- Provide reasonable accommodations for needs related to disability, religion, or other protected grounds, unless it causes undue hardship.
- Implement workplace policies, training, and complaint mechanisms.
- Investigate allegations of discrimination and respond to confirmed discrimination.

Penalties for non-compliance

- Penalties focus on correcting discrimination and preventing future occurrences.
- The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario can order remedies such as monetary compensation, reinstatement of employment, or other workplace accommodations.
- Employers may be ordered to stop discriminatory practices and implement new policies or training.

Further reading

- [Human Rights Code](#)
- [Guide to your rights and responsibilities under the Human Rights Code](#), Ontario Human Rights Commission

Pay Equity Act

Why this legislation matters

The Pay Equity Act helps address systemic gender-based pay discrimination by requiring employers to ensure jobs predominantly held by women are paid equally to comparable jobs predominantly held by men.

Applies to

- Applies to most employers in Ontario, in both the public and private sectors.
- Requirements vary based on sector and organization size, including special rules for small employers and certain industries.

Latest amendment

- 2024-06-27

Requirements for employers

- Establish and maintain pay equity by identifying female-dominated and male-dominated job classes and comparing their value.
- Adjust compensation where wage gaps exist for work of equal value.
- Create and post a pay equity plan (required for most public-sector employers and larger private-sector employers).
- Maintain pay equity over time, ensuring new or changed roles do not recreate wage gaps.

Penalties for non-compliance

- The Pay Equity Commissioner can issue binding orders requiring employers to correct pay inequities and post or update pay equity plans.
- Fines of up to \$5,000 for individuals and up to \$50,000 for corporations.
- Failure to comply can result in continued enforcement action and monitoring until pay equity is achieved.

Further reading

- [Pay Equity Act](#)
- [The Q&A Guide to Ontario's Pay Equity Act](#), Ontario Pay Equity Office

Pay transparency (Bill 149, Working for Workers Four Act)

Why this legislation matters

The Working for Workers Four Act, as well as several other “Working for Workers” Bills (five, six, and seven), have introduced a transformative set of reforms to the [Employment Standards Act \(ESA\)](#), which came into effect on January 1, 2026. These changes aim to dismantle systemic barriers and promote fairer access to employment through greater transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in publicly advertised job postings.

Applies to

- Employers that have at least 25 employees on the day the publicly advertised job posting is posted.

Requirements for employers

- Include either the expected compensation or a salary range (with a maximum range spread of \$50,000) in all publicly advertised job postings.
 - Job postings should also reflect all non-discretionary compensation, like bonuses, commissions, and other guaranteed forms of compensation.
- Disclose when artificial intelligence (AI) is used to screen or assess job applicants.
- Notify all candidates who were interviewed of the final hiring decision within 45 days.
- Keep records of job postings, application forms, and interview follow-up communications for three years after a job posting is no longer publicly available.
- Employers are prohibited from including “Canadian experience” requirements in publicly advertised job postings and application forms.
- Employers can no longer require a medical certificate (“sick note”) as proof when employees take the ESA’s three unpaid sick days.

Penalties for non-compliance

- As these are amendments to the Employment Standards Act, penalties for non-compliance are the same as [the rest of the ESA](#).

Further reading

- [Bill 149, Working for Workers Four Act](#)
- [Employment Standards Act](#)
- [Building fairer workplaces: Ontario's new job posting rules coming January 2026](#), CCDI

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act

Why this legislation matters

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Act establishes the no-fault workplace insurance system administered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). The Act ensures all workers have equal access to injury benefits, rehabilitation, and return-to-work support.

Applies to

- Most provincially regulated employers in Ontario are required to register with WSIB.
- Most workers are covered, including full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal, and some contractors.
- Some industries may be exempt, but they can choose to opt in for coverage.

Latest amendment

- 2025-12-2

Requirements for employers

- Register with WSIB and maintain required coverage.
- Pay premiums and accurately report payroll and insurable earnings.
- Report workplace injuries or illnesses within required timelines.
- Support return to work and cooperate in accommodation and recovery efforts.
- Maintain records and comply with WSIB decisions and audits.

Penalties for non-compliance

- Fines up to \$500,000 for corporations and \$25,000 for individuals, and possible jail time for serious offences.
- WSIB may impose financial penalties, interest, or retroactive premiums for late reporting, underreporting, or non-registration.
- Non-compliant employers may lose WSIB coverage and become liable for injury costs and legal action.

Further reading

- [Workplace Safety and Insurance Act](#)
- [WSIB Ontario](#)
- [Your Guide: services and responsibilities – business edition](#), WSIB Ontario