Bill 229, Working For Workers Six Act: What Ontario Employers Need To Know



The recently enacted *Working for Workers Six Act, 2024* (Bill 229) introduces numerous legislative updates that Ontario employers need to understand and incorporate into their workplace practices. Bill 229 was passed into law in December 2024, meaning several provisions are already in effect, while others are set to roll out in 2025. Here, we break down the key components of Bill 229 and their practical implications for Ontario employers.

1. *Employment Standards Act, 2000*: New Leave Entitlements

Child Placement Leave

A new leave, Child Placement Leave, allows employees to take up to 16 weeks of unpaid leave if they are welcoming a child into their custody, care, and control through adoption or surrogacy. Eligibility requires at least 13 weeks of employment.

Practical Tips:

- Update your employee handbook and leave policies to include this entitlement.
- Train HR staff to recognize requests for this leave and ensure compliance with notice and evidence requirements.
- Consider flexible solutions to accommodate employees who may need this leave.

Long-Term Illness Leave

Employees experiencing serious medical conditions can now access up to 27 weeks of unpaid leave with proper medical certification. Similar to other leaves, eligibility requires 13 consecutive weeks of employment.

Practical Tips:

- Review and revise sick leave and accommodation procedures to align with this provision.
- Create a standardized process for collecting medical certificates while respecting privacy laws.
- Ensure that job protections and re-integration plans are clear for employees returning from extended absences.

2. *Occupational Health and Safety Act*: Increased Equipment Standards and Penalties

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Employers must now ensure that PPE fits properly and is suitable for the workplace. New rules also allow for the assessment of PPE by the Ministry to ensure safety compliance. According to commentary from the Ontario government, this is to ensure properly fitted PPE is available for women in the workplace, and people of diverse body shapes.

Practical Tips:

- Conduct a workplace PPE audit to identify gaps in fit and suitability.
- Consult with employees on PPE needs and provide training on proper usage.
- Stay updated on regulations prescribing PPE assessment standards.

Increased Penalties

Under Bill 229, for corporations convicted of a second or subsequent offence under OHSA that results in the death or serious injury of one or more workers in a two-year period, the minimum fine is $500,000.

3. *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*: Expanded Cancer Presumptions

Firefighters and fire investigators diagnosed with **primary-site kidney or colorectal cancer** will now benefit from presumptive coverage under WSIB. These changes strengthen protections for first responders.

Practical Tips:

- Employers of firefighters or similar roles should familiarize themselves with the presumptive coverage rules and their impact on claims management.
- Collaborate with legal or HR consultants to align workplace policies with these changes.

What Should Employers Do Next?

With the enactment of Bill 229, compliance is more critical than ever. Here's how to stay ahead:

1. **Policy Review:** Ensure all workplace policies reflect the new leave entitlements, PPE requirements, and training standards.
2. **Training and Communication:** Educate HR, management, and staff on their rights and responsibilities under these changes.
3. **Consult Legal Experts:** Seek advice to navigate complex areas like long-term illness leave or WSIB presumptive coverage.
4. **Plan Proactively:** Begin implementing systems to address these requirements before enforcement begins.

The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.

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