

# Employment Law Changes Are Here: Is Your Workplace Ready For 2026?



A new year brings fresh plans, renewed energy, and big goals for growing your business. But January is also when many Ontario employment law changes quietly take effect. If your HR documents have not been reviewed recently, you could be starting 2026 with more risk than you realize.

For small and mid-sized employers, outdated contracts, policies, or job postings are one of the most common sources of workplace disputes. The good news is that a proactive review now can save you stress, time, and legal costs later.

## **Why January Is the Right Time to Review Your HR Documents**

The start of the year is more than a symbolic reset. It is a practical checkpoint for your workplace compliance.

### **Here is why reviewing your HR framework now matters:**

- **Employment laws change on January 1**  
Many legislative updates in Ontario come into force at the start of the year. Waiting months to review your documents can leave you exposed.
- **Fresh eyes catch old problems**  
January creates space to look honestly at what is working and what is outdated, unclear, or no longer enforceable.
- **Growth exposes weak systems**  
Hiring, restructuring, or expanding without solid HR documents often leads to costly mistakes.
- **Clear rules reduce friction**  
Strong, updated policies give managers confidence and employees clarity, which reduces conflict before it starts.

## **Ontario Employment Laws Employers Should Know for 2026**

Ontario workplace laws continue to change in response to labour shortages, evolving hiring practices, and increased focus on transparency and safety. If your HR documents do not reflect these updates, your business may already be behind.

### **Key Ontario legislative changes in force as of January 1, 2026 include:**

#### **Easier Labour Mobility for Certified Professionals**

Ontario's Labour Mobility Act introduced an "as of right" framework that allows many non-health regulated professionals from other provinces to work in Ontario more easily. This affects over 50 regulatory bodies and hundreds of certifications. Health professionals are covered under similar legislation.

**Why this matters for employers:**

Recruitment policies, credential checks, and onboarding practices may need updating to reflect these changes.

**New Job Posting Rules Under the Employment Standards Act**

Ontario employers now face stricter rules around job postings, including requirements related to compensation disclosure, vacancy status, use of artificial intelligence in hiring, and barriers to immigrant workers.

**Why this matters for employers:**

Non-compliant job postings can attract scrutiny and complaints before a candidate is even hired.

**Defibrillators Required on Certain Construction Sites**

Under Ontario health and safety legislation, construction projects lasting three months or longer with 20 or more workers must now have a defibrillator on site and a trained worker available.

**Why this matters for employers:**

Health and safety policies and site procedures must reflect these obligations to avoid serious compliance issues.

**Where HR Documents Commonly Fall Out of Date**

Many employers assume compliance means reacting when something goes wrong. In reality, most issues start quietly with documents that no longer reflect the law or how the workplace actually operates.

A smart review looks at the **entire employee lifecycle**, including:

- **Recruitment**  
Job postings, interview practices, timelines, and candidate communications
- **Hiring and onboarding**  
Employment contracts, offer letters, probation terms
- **Active employment**  
Workplace policies, procedures, employee handbooks, remote work rules
- **Health and safety**  
Training records, reporting procedures, site-specific requirements

**Why Updated HR Documents Protect Your Business**

Your HR documents do more than sit in a folder. They shape how decisions are made every day and how disputes are resolved when things get difficult.

**Keeping them current helps you:**

- **Stay legally compliant**  
Reduce the risk of penalties, investigations, or unexpected liability
- **Lower dispute risk**  
Clear, enforceable documents prevent small issues from becoming legal problems
- **Support consistent management decisions**

Managers rely on policies when handling performance, discipline, and terminations

- **Build trust and clarity**

Employees are more confident when expectations are clearly set and consistently applied

Strong HR documents also signal professionalism. That matters when you are hiring, scaling, or dealing with a workplace issue under pressure.

## **A Proactive Approach Beats Damage Control**

Waiting until a complaint, investigation, or termination forces a review is expensive and stressful. A proactive HR compliance review helps you identify gaps early and fix them before they create real problems.

At Spring Law, we work collaboratively with employers to review and update HR frameworks in a way that fits how your business actually operates. No legal jargon. No over-lawyering. Just clear, practical guidance that reduces risk and helps you get back to business.

As you plan for the year ahead, ask yourself one question:

**Do your HR documents protect your business as it exists today, or the one you had years ago?**

If you are not sure, that is usually your answer.

*Source: Ontario regulations and statutes in force as of January 1, 2026.*

*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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