

New Government Workplace Harassment And Workplace Violence Initiatives To Roll Out In 2015



On December 4, 2014, Premier Kathleen Wynne announced new initiatives to raise awareness of sexual violence and harassment, to enhance prevention measures and to combat harassment, violence and discrimination on the basis of sex. The initiatives are also intended to improve support available for victims of harassment, discrimination and violence.

The initiatives include the following:

- A public education campaign to be launched in early 2015;
- Measures to improve government caucus policies, procedures and training around workplace discrimination, harassment and violence prevention, including training for all MPPs and staff, as well as a review of policies in place to ensure conformity with best practices;
- The creation of a standing Roundtable on Violence Against Women to provide input into the government's initiatives; and
- Consideration of options for enhancing support for victims of sexual violence relating to the criminal justice system, policing, health care, education, post-secondary campuses and workplaces. An action plan on this item is to be brought forward by March 8, 2015.

Ontario employers have a number of legal duties under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* in respect of workplace safety including undertaking risk assessments, and developing, implementing and maintaining policies and programs to address workplace violence and workplace harassment. Every Ontario employer must prepare a policy on workplace violence and workplace harassment. Moreover, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* requires Ontario employers to review their workplace harassment and workplace violence policies as often as necessary, but at least annually.

As the 2014 calendar year comes to an end, Ontario employers may want follow in the government's footsteps and schedule some time soon to review their workplace harassment and workplace violence policies for compliance with applicable legislation, and to ensure their policies and programs are appropriate given the characteristics and risk assessments of the workplace.

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