

Ontario Ramps up Workplace Inspections to Combat COVID-19

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By Daniel Wong, John Wilkinson, Max Skrow

The Ontario government recently announced additional measures aimed at addressing the recent rise in COVID-19 cases in the province,[\[1\]](#) and are now taking steps to ensure that these new measures are being implemented.

Beginning Saturday January 16, 2021, approximately 50 Ministry of Labour inspectors, together with local bylaw officers and police officers, will be conducting workplace investigations in big-box retailers in the Toronto, Hamilton, Peel, York, and Durham regions. The inspections will focus on compliance with mask-wearing, physical distancing, and other health and safety requirements imposed on businesses to combat the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Ontario. Inspectors will be issuing tickets for non-compliance and have been authorized to temporarily close premises and/or disperse crowds of more than five people.

While this initiative is focused on big-box stores in specific regions, employers in all industries and regions should be aware of these enforcement measures and should work towards ensuring that their workplaces will be found compliant if the Ontario government expands its the scope of these enforcement measures. Employers in industries that are the subject of the government's "Stay Safe All Day" campaign could be the subject of similar inspections. The "Stay Safe All Day" campaign focuses on the following workplaces:

- workplaces with reported COVID-19 outbreaks;[\[2\]](#)
- manufacturing;
- warehousing;
- distribution centres;
- food processing;
- construction projects; and
- publicly accessible, essential workplaces such as pharmacies and grocery stores.

Employers, regardless of the industry in which they operate or whether they are covered by the Stay Safe All Day campaign, should work to proactively implement policies and practices that comply with the current public health requirements as well as the requirements under the applicable occupational health and safety legislation.

WeirFoulds' employment law group is monitoring these developments and will be providing updates as the COVID-19 situation progresses. For more information on how to respond to COVID-19 in your workplace or organization, please contact [Daniel Wong](#), [John Wilkinson](#) or [Max Skrow](#).

[\[1\] Ontario Declares Emergency and Issues Stay-at-Home Order: What are the Implications for Employers?](#)

[\[2\]](#) Local governments have also began reporting COVID-19 outbreaks in workplaces and naming employers. For more information, click here: [Comply or Beware: Toronto to Begin Naming Employers With COVID-19 Outbreaks](#)

The information and comments herein are for the general information of the reader and are not intended as advice or opinion to be relied upon in relation to any particular circumstances. For particular application of the law to specific situations, the reader should seek professional advice.

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