

Ontario's First Chief Prevention Officer To Spearhead Improvements To Worker Health And Safety

December 16, 2011

In December 2010, an Expert Panel on Occupational Health and Safety released its final report after a comprehensive review of Ontario's workplace health and safety system.

On June 1, 2011, Bill 160, the [Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011](#), received Royal Assent, establishing the legislative framework enabling the Ministry of Labour to implement many of the report's key recommendations.

Chief Prevention Officer

[George Gritziotis](#) became Ontario's first Chief Prevention Officer (CPO) and Associate Deputy Minister in mid-October.

As CPO, he is responsible for:

- establishing a provincial occupational health and safety strategy
- providing the minister each year with a report on the performance of Ontario's occupational health and safety system
- promoting the alignment of prevention activities across all workplace health and safety system partners
- providing advice on preventing occupational injuries and illnesses
- advising on proposed changes for the funding and delivery of prevention services
- working with Ontario's Health and Safety Associations (HSAs) to establish effective delivery of prevention programs and services
- monitoring the HSAs' compliance with standards set by the minister.

He also has the authority to set standards for health and safety training.

Expert Advisory Panel

In January 2010, Tony Dean was appointed as chair of an expert advisory panel to lead a review of Ontario's occupational health and safety enforcement and prevention system. The panel included three members each from labour, employers and academia.

The [panel's consensus report](#) — released in December 2010 — highlighted the need for:

- enhanced training, including mandatory basic awareness information for workers and frontline supervisors, training for high-hazard work, and training for health and safety representatives
- greater access to health and safety resources and support
- improved protections for workers against employer reprisals for raising health and safety concerns
- a new Occupational Health and Safety system structure to create more effective prevention programs that are aligned with enforcement efforts.

Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011 (Bill 160)

The panel recommendations led to the most significant changes in 30 years to Ontario's system for preventing work-related injury and illness. A series of new amendments to the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) and [Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997](#) establishes the Ministry of Labour as the lead for injury and illness prevention, transferring it from the Workplace Safety Insurance Board and gives the Minister the powers to:

- appoint a Chief Prevention Officer to coordinate and align the prevention system
- create a new prevention council, with representatives from labour, employers, and safety experts, to advise the CPO and the Minister of Labour
- establish standards for the province's Health and Safety Associations; workplace health and safety education and training; and promotion of workplace safety.

Ontario's Health and Safety System Partners

Ontario's occupational health and safety system comprises the Ministry of Labour, and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and six Health and Safety Associations.

- [Workers Health & Safety Centre](#) is a designated occupational health and safety training centre for workers.
- [Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers](#) provides comprehensive occupational health services and information.
- [Workplace Safety & Prevention Services](#); [Infrastructure Health & Safety Association](#); [Public Services Health & Safety Association](#), and [Workplace Safety North](#) all offer sector-specific support to employers.

Planned Improvements to Ontario's Workplace Health and Safety System

- The Ministry of Labour intends to propose a new regulation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) that would enable the Office of the Worker Adviser and the Office of the Employer Adviser to provide support for workers and small business involved in reprisal complaints. The Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) and the ministry have mapped out a proposed process for expediting resolution of OHSA-related reprisals where the worker's employment has been terminated; including the role ministry inspectors will play in the proposed process.
- A poster explaining workplace parties' basic rights and responsibilities under the OHSA will soon be available in various languages for consultation with stakeholders. Display of the poster at worksites may later become mandatory, after a period of notice.
- The ministry has prepared a health and safety awareness workbook for workers and an employer guide to the health and safety program for workers. This is also ready for consultation.
- The Minister plans to appoint two new minister's advisory ("Section 21") committees in 2012, one for small business and another for vulnerable workers.
- Preparations are under way for moving responsibility for funding and monitoring the Health and Safety Associations from the WSIB to the Ministry of Labour so that system prevention activities can be better coordinated.
- A permanent Prevention Council will soon be appointed, including representatives of business and labour and other health and safety experts.