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Occupational Health and Safety in Ontario (April 2019 - March 2020)

An annual report on Ontario's health and safety system activities

Message from the Chief Prevention Officer and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Operations

What a year this has been. During these unprecedented times, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) has been busy working on behalf of Ontarians to improve health and safety in the workplace.

In 2019-20, our ministry continued to build our health and safety system in an integrated way. We were able to renew our commitment to working together and leading Ontario's health and safety system towards improvements. We and our health and safety system partners ensure that we are all planning and working together in alignment to reach our shared objectives and priorities. We are committed to capitalizing on new opportunities to drive positive change in Ontario, and we take a preventative and proactive approach when it comes to workplace health and safety.

In 2019, there were 73 fatalities from traumatic injuries in Ontario, down from 85 in 2018. It is worth noting that there were 17 fatalities in 2019 due to falls from height (down from 21 in 2018) and, as of February 2021, there have been eleven fatalities in 2020 due to falls from height. The 2020 statistics require annual confirmation with WSIB, which takes place in April.

In the 2019-2020 fiscal year alone, over 204,000 workers completed working at heights training or refresher training. The [Institute for Work and Health](#), in its [evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of Ontario's working at heights training standard](#) (PDF), found evidence that working at heights training reached the target audience and had an impact at the work site. From May 6–10, 2019 the ministry and its health and safety association (HSA) partners asked workplaces to participate in Ontario's second annual Falls Awareness Week (FAW). Through workplace discussion and participation, the Falls Awareness Week campaign brings awareness to the falls hazards that exist in every workplace.

Towards the end of the last fiscal year, the COVID-19 pandemic played a central role in our workplace activities and how we operated as a ministry. Through inter-agency cooperation and engagement, the Coronavirus Advisory Team of the Operations Division and the Pandemic Workplace Safety Branch of the Prevention Office have done a great deal of preventative and enforcement work beyond the end of last fiscal year. Our ministry and our health and safety system partners facilitated the production of hundreds of guidance documents and a workplace safety plan, and we continue to learn lessons on how best to respond to the pandemic to keep Ontarians safe.

Ministry inspectors have continued to perform inspections based on risk. During the last fiscal year, MLTSD conducted over 81,000 field visits to workplaces, both proactive and reactive. The main purpose is to monitor for compliance with the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA) through the use of administrative and

regulatory enforcement powers. Inspections also serve to raise awareness of workplace hazards and workplace rights and responsibilities.

As part of our ministry's vision to foster a strong culture of workplace health and safety through collaboration we have created a voluntary accreditation and employer recognition program. The [Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers](#) (SOSE) program, announced in November of 2019, is the first of its kind in Canada, encouraging workplaces to improve health and safety and prevent injury and illness. Organizations recognized by the Chief Prevention Officer (CPO) for successfully implementing an accredited occupational health and safety system may also be eligible for financial incentives from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

Complementing the SOSE program, WSIB launched its [Health and Safety Excellence Program](#) (HSEP) in November 2019. This program involves minimal administrative effort because it is available through a digital platform. It helps businesses to improve workplace health and safety by providing them with financial and non-financial incentives, support from a WSIB-approved provider and a clear roadmap to workplace health and safety.

And the [Infrastructure Health & Safety Association's COR™ 2020](#) program has been CPO-accredited as an occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS) for the purposes of the SOSE program. This means that organizations that have achieved their COR™ 2020 certification can apply to become a CPO-recognized employer and may be eligible for financial incentives from WSIB.

System partners have come together to plan and deliver communications and marketing, training and education, and compliance support activities that align with strategic priorities across the system. To better support Ontario workplaces, the ministry has started working with the health and safety associations to develop new health and safety programs. Over the 2019-20 fiscal year, the CPO set aside a minimum of 10% of the annual transfer payment budget provided to four health and safety associations to address the most dangerous and high-risk sectors.

Part of our ministry's vision has also entailed its restructuring. The new, expanded MLTSD includes the Employment & Training Division and the Workplace Policy & Innovation Division, which used to belong to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (now the Ministry of Colleges and Universities). It also includes the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, which used to belong to the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation & Trade. This means that all Government of Ontario functions related to workplaces and employment are now housed in one ministry.

In 2019, MLTSD undertook a health and safety compliance initiative entitled "[high risk traumatic hazards—slips, trips and falls](#)." The rationale behind the initiative was that from 2011 to 2017, [falls were among the highest cause of traumatic fatalities](#) in the province. Workplace violence prevention in the [health care](#) and [education](#) sectors has also been a key focus of the ministry's compliance program over the past few years. Data show violence is a growing issue especially in the health care and education sectors.

Together, we — our ministry, our health and safety system partners, and Ontarians — have done a great deal to make sure Ontario workplaces are safe and healthy.

- **Ron Kelusky**
Chief Prevention Officer, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
- **Jody Young**
Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Message from Prevention Council

Over the past year, the council was honoured to contribute to the realization of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) system's vision of protecting and promoting the health, safety, mental health, and wellbeing of workers across the province. We were able to capitalize on the OHS expertise of our members to streamline our

strategic advice and feedback to the Minister and the Chief Prevention Officer on the implementation of innovative, comprehensive, and evidence-based initiatives across the system. We also continue to advise the ministry on the new strategy and the OHS system's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The past year has also been a year of renewal for the council — new council members were appointed by the Minister, a new chair was elected, and new outreach efforts were initiated. We intend to build on this momentum in the year ahead by collaborating with the ministry to improve the Occupational Health and Safety system's effectiveness in the areas of health and safety training, the internal responsibility system and joint health and safety committees, tower cranes review and recommendations, occupational disease prevention, infection prevention and control, and supports for small business. We also intend to expand our outreach to OHS system partners, OHS advisory committees, workers, employers, and the public.

The work of the OHS system will be even more vital as Ontario's workers and employers grapple with the unprecedented effects of COVID-19. We are confident that the ministry and system partners are up for the challenge and we are committed to working with them as we strive to make Ontario's workplaces the healthiest and safest in the world.

We would be remiss without also announcing, with profound sadness, the passing of Prevention Council member Frank Saunders. Throughout his career, Frank held positions with Ontario Hydro, McMaster University and Bruce Power. But even in retirement, he continued to give of his time as a member of the Nuclear Innovation Institute Board, as the lead for New Technology Development at Bruce Power, and as a Prevention Council member.

It was an honour to work with Frank. He will be missed.

Prevention Council members, 2019-20

- **Blair Allin**
National Health and Safety Representative, International Brotherhood of Boilermakers
- **Dan Bonnar**
Firefighter, Ontario Professional Firefighters Association
- **Patrick Bourgeois (Vice-Chair)**
Construction Manager, Peter Kiewit Sons ULC
- **John Bourke**
Business Manager/Financial Secretary, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
- **Michael Dauncey**
Director Health and Safety Corporate, Mattamy Homes
- **Colin de Raaf**
Director of Training, CLAC
- **Daniel Fleming**
Manager, Training and Development GTA, NORCAT
- **Erin Oliver (Chair)**
Vice President of Health, Safety and Sustainability, Modern Niagara Group Inc.
- **Frank Saunders**
Vice President of Nuclear Oversight and Regulatory Affairs, Bruce Power
- **Patricia Pereira Janicas**
Director, Health & Safety, Kenaidan Contracting Ltd.
- **Peter Rowe**
Director, Chair of the Regulatory Committee, Ontario Petroleum Institute Inc.
- **James St. John**
Business Manager/Financial Secretary, Central Ontario Building Trades
- **Roger Tickner**
President, Tickner and Associates Inc.

- **Susanna Zagar**
Chief Strategy and Analytics Officer, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Collaborative efforts

Ontario's [occupational health and safety system](#) is complex and includes many organizations. To have the most impact on health and safety in Ontario workplaces, it is important that the partners work together towards the same goals. Organizations that have expertise can learn from one another and, together, be more effective.

The following are some examples of ways the system collaborated in 2019-2020.

Integration of Ministry of Labour with Training and Skills Development

Beginning in October of 2019, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) expanded and became the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD). The Strategic Integration Secretariat was developed in response to this transformation.

The new, expanded MLTSD includes the Employment and Training Division and the Workplace Policy and Innovation Division, which used to belong to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (now the Ministry of Colleges and Universities). It also includes the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, which used to be part of the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. This change means that the newly formed MLTSD will truly be a ministry of “work”, with all Government of Ontario functions related to workplaces and employment now housed in one ministry.

The Strategic Integration Secretariat was created to develop an integration plan that helps the new ministry serve the public on work-related issues. The Secretariat's work is ongoing and focuses on:

- looking for opportunities for collaboration across the new ministry's teams, branches and divisions
- coordinating business practices so the ministry is more efficient and delivers even better results
- reviewing the ministry's organizational structure to make sure it supports the needs of Ontarians in the best ways possible; and
- expressing a vision that represents all parts of the new ministry and has its eye on the future

COVID-19

In January of 2020, MLTSD began discussions with the Ministry of Health and Public Health Ontario about COVID-19, and MLTSD inspectors were conducting proactive visits. In March of 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development immediately collaborated with occupational health and safety partners to help protect workers from the virus. This included leading and participating in decision-making tables with other ministries and stakeholders.

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) worked with provincial health and safety associations to develop sector-specific guidance documents and resources to help essential businesses continue working safely and protect workers from COVID-19. For example, the Chief Prevention Officer worked quickly with stakeholders in the construction sector to update guidance to help construction employers and employees better understand their responsibilities and what is needed to stop the spread of COVID-19 on the job site. The update addressed sector-specific topics such as providing better on-site sanitation (with a focus on high-touch areas like site trailers, door handles and hoists); communicating roles, responsibilities and health and safety policies by, for example, posting site sanitation schedules and work schedules; and enabling greater distance between workers by staggering shifts, restricting site numbers, and limiting elevator usage. We also worked collaboratively on supporting items such as a risk assessment tool and a workplace safety plan.

From mid-March, when many of our office staff began working from home to lessen the spread of the virus, we have worked together over online meeting platforms to deliver these essential pieces of guidance to Ontarians. During this time, the health and safety associations and private training providers began preparations to move their training and services online. Our health and safety inspectors, however, continued to respond to complaints and work refusals and conduct in-person inspections through the peak of the pandemic.

Learning a new way of working together, we rose to the challenge.

Work to help protect workers and support employers, including reopening the economy, carried on as the pandemic evolved through the 2020-21 fiscal year.

Consultations on 2021-26 occupational health and safety strategy

In 2019 the ministry worked with its health and safety system partners to develop Ontario's next occupational health and safety strategy, due to be released in 2021.

In April of 2019, the ministry held in-person and online public consultations to gather feedback. Over 1,000 Ontarians provided our ministry with suggestions on how to promote workplace health and safety, strengthen the occupational health and safety system, and support Ontario businesses in improving their health and safety. Therefore, the focus will be evidence-based, crafted based on a public health model, and focused on outcomes and accountability. Measurement of its effectiveness will be linked to the [Office of the Auditor General of Ontario's 2019 Annual Report](#).

The meetings took place in seven different Ontario cities — Hamilton, Kingston, London, Mississauga, Ottawa, Sudbury and Thunder Bay — in meeting spaces provided by our ministry's health and safety system partners. Participants included employers, workers, employer associations, lawyers, health and safety consultants, private training providers, health and safety associations and representatives from local municipalities.

Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers program, developed in parallel with Health and Safety Excellence Program

In November 2019 the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) announced the [Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers](#) (SOSE) program, the first of its kind in Canada. Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers is a voluntary accreditation and employer recognition program. It motivates Ontario employers to adopt occupational health and safety management systems (OHSMSs) that go beyond minimum compliance with the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA). In this way, it encourages workplaces to improve health and safety and prevent injury, illness and fatalities.

The Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers (SOSE) program was developed based on the recommendations of the 2010 Expert Advisory Panel Report (EAP) led by Tony Dean, a former Deputy Minister of Labour. The EAP made a recommendation that Ontario should have a voluntary accreditation program. Changes to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* in 2016 gave the CPO the authority to establish standards that an OHSMS would have to meet to become accredited by the Chief Prevention Officer. The changes also give the CPO the power to approve new and existing OHSMS that meet ministry standards, and to recognize employers that put CPO-approved standards into place and meet other compliance criteria.

The SOSE program offers incentives to employers that have put into place a CPO-approved OHSMS. Non-financial incentives include having the organization's name published on the ministry's website and allowing these organizations to use CPO branding that shows they meet the program's requirements.

Complementing the SOSE program, WSIB launched its Health and Safety Excellence Program (HSEp) in November 2019. The program offers 36 health and safety topics that are building blocks to SOSE. Besides expert support and guidance for workplaces trying to improve health and safety, direct benefits include

recognition badges and rebates on WSIB premiums. This program has a flexible design and offers a clear roadmap to achieving a better workplace health and safety culture. Learn more about the [Health and Safety Excellence Program](#).

Of note is that the [Infrastructure Health & Safety Association's COR™ 2020](#) program has been CPO-accredited as an OHSMS for the purposes of the SOSE program. This means that organizations that have achieved their COR™ 2020 certification can apply to become a CPO-recognized employer and may be eligible for financial incentives from WSIB.

2019-20 funding modernization for Health and Safety Associations

Starting in 2019-2020, the ministry modernized its funding relationship with the Health and Safety Associations (HSAs) by introducing a new funding model. The new model will increase accountability and ensure better use of evidence and performance measurement and improved return on investment.

The new model includes:

- allocation of 10% of base budgets for programs in high-risk areas that require immediate solutions (see next section on CPO-directed programs)
- ensuring these programs are developed using evidence and demonstrate value for money
- ensuring that programs include targets and an evaluation plan
- obtaining information on sectors served by certain HSAs (for example, employers, geographic locations, key stakeholders)

CPO-directed programs

Beginning in 2019-20, the CPO set aside a minimum of 10% of the annual transfer payment budget provided to four of the six Health and Safety Associations to address the most dangerous and high-risk sectors. Some of these priority sectors include forestry, mining, agriculture, construction, transportation and young workers in manufacturing. In addition, the Safe Workplace Associations (SWAs) were also asked to address the issue of mental health, which cuts across all sectors. The SWAs have up to three years to implement their programs starting in 2019-20. At present some of these programs have reached completion. Others are near completion or underway.

In 2019-20, the following programs were approved by the CPO:

[Public Services Health & Safety Association](#) (PSHSA)

- Mental Health & Impairment Program, including
 - [Beyond Silence training and app](#)
 - [Managing Mental Health Stay at Work and Return to Work in First Responder Organizations](#)
 - [Healthy worker resources](#)
- Joint health and safety committee (JHSC) certification part 1 English

[Infrastructure Health & Safety Association](#) (IHSA)

- General Trucking
 - [Distracted Driving news release with link to the eCourse](#)
- Residential Construction
 - [Awareness brochure for homeowners](#) (PDF) – a direct-mail publication to educate homeowners whose subdivision was built approximately 10–14 years ago. The publication highlighted the risks associated with hiring roofing contractors who are not registered with WSIB and/or who have not

completed working at heights (WAH) training in accordance with the working at heights training program and training provider standards.

Workplace Safety North (WSN)

- Ground Control
- [Safe Driving on Forest Roads](#)
- [Safe Driving on Forest Roads Recreation Workshop](#)

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS)

- [Greenhouse Risk Assessment Project](#)
- Laying the Foundation for Workplace Mental Harm Prevention
- [Young Workers Project – Windsor-Essex County Project](#)

The Research management framework

The Prevention Office developed the Research Management Framework (RMF). Its role is to guide occupational health and safety research activities and funding within the occupational health and safety (OHS) system, and its goal is to make a positive impact and provide Ontarians with value for money spent on research.

The RMF introduces the Prevention Office's approach to creating high-quality evidence and data on important OHS issues and solutions. It does this through focused research and partnerships. It also presents strategic actions to turn research into practice to ensure evidence and data are used to inform OHS programs, policies and decision-making. The RMF provides a strong foundation on how to evaluate and measure the performance of OHS activities.

This is an important milestone and tool for the Prevention Office and the OHS system. It will guide strategic research and support the implementation of the upcoming OHS strategy. All the OHS system partners will be expected to align their strategic plans with the RMF.

Occupational health and safety research

In 2019-20, the ministry provided operational funding support to five [occupational health and safety research centres](#):

- [Institute for Work and Health](#)
- [Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease](#)
- [Centre of Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders](#)
- [Occupational Cancer Research Centre](#)
- [Centre for Research in Occupational Safety and Health](#)

Funding supports workplace health and safety research on topics such as occupational disease, occupational cancers, disability prevention and prevention of musculoskeletal disorders. Research centres completed 39 projects and produced 132 publications in 2019-20.

Through the previously funded [Research Opportunities Program](#) (ROP) and the [Occupational Health, Safety and Prevention Innovation Program](#) (OHSPPI), 10 research projects were completed in 2019-20. The projects addressed the following topics:

- organizational change in long-term care
- mobile equipment hazards
- worker health protection
- heat-vulnerable workers

- how to address exposures to harmful substances in the workplace
- risk of cancer in the construction industry
- the Internal Responsibility System
- occupational exposures in nail salons
- workplace mental health
- health and safety among police officers

The research and related activities were used in areas such as:

- occupational disease and injury surveillance
- workplace exposure surveillance tools
- improving the understanding and prevention of occupational disease and work-related musculoskeletal disorders
- informing policies and procedures of long-term care centres in Ontario
- development of gender and sex-sensitive OHS policies
- professionals in the ergonomic, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and disability management fields
- compensation boards and workers' health clinics
- informing policies and procedures of mining companies
- creation of educational kits for the mining community (vibration, fatigue and line-of-sight safety kits)

More [information](#) on Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development prevention office research can be found on the website.

Ipsos survey: Attitudes, opinions, and behaviours of workers in Ontario

In 2018, MLTSD asked Ipsos to conduct a survey of Ontarians to find out about attitudes, opinions, beliefs and behaviours of workers related to occupational health and safety. In total 5,365 Ontario workers and managers participated in the survey. The survey revealed that general knowledge about OHS in Ontario was relatively strong, with 61% of respondents indicating they were knowledgeable. The vast majority of those who claimed to know about OHS (78%) said their employers provided them with the relevant information. The most sought-after types of information included material on harassment, dangerous substances, slipping and tripping, mental health, back injuries, repetitive strain injuries, machine safety and violence at work. Noteworthy was that most respondents (84%) who received OHS training reported that it was useful. Ipsos found that, when learning about OHS rules and procedures, respondents were most likely to trust organizations dedicated to providing health and safety information, their supervisors or managers. The survey also indicated mental illness or stress was recognized as one of the highest risks associated with the workplaces. The information from the survey will help the ministry to better support Ontario workers when creating new policy and programs.

Strategic foresight

The Prevention Office launched a strategic foresight study on the future of occupational health and safety in Ontario. It did so in response to rapid changes and increased uncertainties in the workplace in Canada and around the world. The goal of the study is to anticipate future hazards and risks to occupational health and safety up until 2035 and to take actions to protect the health and safety of Ontario workers and workplaces.

To achieve this goal, the Prevention Office worked with the Policy Innovation Hub in Cabinet Office to conduct a study of the future through internet searches and expert interviews, looking for signals of change and trends related to occupational health and safety in Ontario. Common trends included the increasing amount of remote work and the rise of platform companies, or the gig economy.

Based on these trends, the study identified a set of possible scenarios about what the future of OHS could look like in Ontario. It also identified recommendations on the way forward.

This study is an important step towards a proactive approach to identifying and tracking emerging trends and positioning the ministry to address present and future occupational health and safety issues. It will be used to inform future prevention-related research and initiatives in Ontario. This work has also informed the development of the 2021-26 Occupational Health and Safety Strategy.

Risk assessments

Risk assessment and root-cause analysis workshops are used by MLTSD to help industry sectors identify high-risk events and hazards in their workplaces. This allows the ministry, health and safety partners, and industry sectors to work together to reduce those risks and prevent workplace injury, illness and deaths. These risk assessment workshops bring together experts — employers, workers, academics, enforcement and HSA staff — to identify, discuss and analyze the leading risks in different sectors. While the ministry and HSAs lead the sessions, it is the workers and employers who have the final say in identifying and ranking the risks. This approach builds on a “for the industry, by the industry” perspective.

In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the ministry arranged risk assessment workshops for the transportation-general trucking-general freight sector. A root-cause analysis workshop on the topic of driver fatigue was conducted for this sector, a root-cause analysis on distracted driving was conducted for the logging sector, and a root-cause analysis on water management was conducted for the underground mining sector. In addition, phase one of a root-cause analysis for working at heights training was conducted for the roofing sector. Work continues on generating solutions and controls for the underground mining, logging, sawmills, and greenhouse sectors based on the results from earlier workshops.

An important part of the ministry’s process is recognizing that one organization or person can’t provide all the perspectives needed for an accurate understanding of risk. Engaging workers and employers from many workplaces and sectors lets them see and share different perspectives and agree on the top health and safety risks in the sector. This lets system partners focus their resources on the highest risks.

Identifying the highest-risk hazards by each sector also allows the ministry to collect and analyze the most relevant data to make decisions.

These workshops have been widely recognized by industry and system partners as an effective way of collecting insight on workplace issues and as a best practice for engagement and collaboration. By coming together, system partners and workplaces can better understand the issues and develop better prevention strategies.

Safe At Work Ontario consultations

Safe At Work Ontario (SAWO) is a MLTSD Operations Division program to raise awareness of, and support compliance with, the [*Occupational Health and Safety Act*](#) (OHSA). Safe At Work Ontario helps to direct the ministry’s efforts on the areas of greatest need through annual sector-specific compliance plans. These plans guide the work of inspectors and their proactive visits while providing additional transparency on their activities.

Ongoing stakeholder engagement is key to SAWO. It helps the ministry understand what is happening in workplaces, so it can respond to changes. The ministry uses the information gathered during stakeholder consultations as part of its planning processes.

In October of 2019, the ministry’s Operations Division held consultations to support Safe at Work Ontario. Co-hosted with Ontario’s HSAs, the consultations sought input from stakeholders on the ministry’s compliance strategy to help promote healthy and safe workplaces. The ministry released a consultation paper online in advance of the sessions, with links and resources, for stakeholder review. This year an additional online survey was posted with the consultation paper asking stakeholders for their opinion on topics for upcoming health and safety initiatives.

Stakeholders were notified and invited to consultations via various means through email, the ministry's What's New newsletter, HSA's, stakeholder meetings and a posting on the website with the consultation paper. We encouraged employers, workers and other workplace health and safety stakeholders to participate in our consultation sessions.

Over 100 stakeholders provided feedback through our sessions and our online survey. The survey was used to collect information to help shape the ministry's focus for the 2020-21 initiatives on high-risk traumatic hazards and occupational health hazards. The results are as follows:

Top high-risk traumatic concerns, based on stakeholder feedback

1. violence
2. slips, trips and falls
3. prevention/awareness training
4. motor vehicle incidents/traffic
5. musculoskeletal disorders
6. personal protective equipment (PPE)
7. cuts
8. struck by
9. electrical
10. arc flash drop zone

Top occupational health concerns, based on stakeholder feedback

1. musculoskeletal disorders
2. mental health
3. violence
4. noise
5. harassment
6. supervisor accountability/training
7. education/awareness/training
8. dust
9. carcinogens
10. infection control
11. fatigue/overwork
12. slips, trips and falls

Stakeholders also identified a number of topics that have an effect on occupational health and safety beyond identified hazards. Some of these topics included:

- aging workforce
- impairment/fit-for-duty
- staffing levels
- mental health/workplace stress

For more information on the Safe At Work Ontario sessions, please email SAWOconsultations@ontario.ca.

Occupational disease

In Ontario, more workers die from occupational diseases than injuries. [In 2019 there were 117 deaths from occupational disease, compared with 73 deaths from traumatic injuries, according to the WSIB.](#) Occupational diseases have high financial costs to workers, businesses and the compensation system. Between 2010 and 2019, the WSIB allowed about [136,000 occupational disease claims](#), which made up over \$910 million in benefit

costs. However, workers compensation statistics largely underestimate the true impact of occupational illness because many occupational diseases are not recognized or reported.

The Occupational Disease Action Plan (ODAP) is a project that brings together system partners and those from the broader network — such as Public Health Ontario and the Lung Health Foundation — to focus on occupational disease prevention. In 2019-2020 ODAP continued to align the work of the system partners with the goal of reducing hazardous exposures in Ontario workplaces and decreasing the incidence and burden of occupational disease.

The ODAP added a new working group to focus on the control and prevention of respiratory hazards that included asbestos, crystalline silica, diesel engine exhaust, welding fumes, dusts and vapours from paints and solvents, cleaning products and isocyanates. Approximately 70% of allowed occupational disease claims are for lung diseases such as lung cancer, mesothelioma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) that take years to develop after the first exposure to respiratory hazards at work.

To increase awareness of the control of exposures to respiratory hazards, ODAP members posted resources and tools on the [Prevent Occupational Disease](#) website. A link to the website was shared in a toolkit, developed for the Healthy Workers in Healthy Workplaces initiative. Additionally, ODAP members delivered a [respiratory hazards webinar](#) and presented at the Partners in Prevention regional conferences in Ottawa and Thunder Bay.

Other activities in 2019-20 include the creation and launch of a [HazardAssess](#) app by Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW), in partnership with Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), which allows workers to identify and communicate about hazards in the workplace and learn about controls, and a two-day national occupational disease exposure and surveillance workshop, hosted by the Occupational Cancer Research Centre. The workshop brought together representatives from the federal and provincial governments, government agencies, unions, compensation boards and researchers from across the country to share experiences, identify new and effective systems to monitor occupational disease trends, and identify opportunities to continue to work together.

Construction health and safety action plan

Released in May 2017, [Ontario's Construction Health and Safety Action Plan](#) (CHSAP) contains 16 recommendations and 41 initiatives. Its aim is to create a more knowledgeable, skilled construction sector and to increase compliance with occupational health and safety laws. Most of these activities are either completed or ongoing.

In 2019, the Auditor General of Ontario advised that the ministry continue putting into place recommendations outlined in sector-specific action plans, including CHSAP. Based on the auditor general's advice and the CHSAP Advisory Group's input, the ministry developed a new framework to guide CHSAPs implementation. The new framework includes ways to strengthen responsibility and performance measurement. It also includes four focus areas for the future:

1. helping employers and workers increase compliance
2. strengthening collaboration and partnership with the construction sector
3. creating environments that encourage and promote workplace health and safety
4. developing a stronger evidence base and exploring new ways to promote health and safety

Falls Awareness Week

From May 6–10, 2019 the ministry and its health and safety association (HSA) partners asked workplaces to participate in Ontario's second annual Falls Awareness Week (FAW). Through workplace discussion and participation, the FAW campaign brings awareness to the falls hazards that exist in every workplace.

During FAW, workplaces are encouraged to stop work for 15–30 minutes to have a safety talk about common fall hazards in their work environment. The talks encourage an environment of open communication where workplace questions and concerns can be addressed.

Falls awareness week participants were encouraged to use free downloadable Fall Prevention Safety Toolkits, developed by each HSA with support from the ministry. More than 1,000 toolkits were downloaded.

The 2019 campaign brought attention to all types of slip, trip and fall hazards across all sectors in Ontario. For 2019, FAW formed part of the compliance assistance portion of the slips, trips and falls inspection initiative. Falls Awareness Week increases workplace knowledge and promotes awareness of construction workplace hazards.

Small business

Research and discussions with system partners continues to address the needs and information gaps small businesses have in complying with occupational health and safety standards. This work has also informed the development of the 2021-26 Occupational Health and Safety Strategy.

Health and safety webpage for small businesses

The ministry launched an updated webpage specifically for [small businesses](#). The content is presented in a user-friendly format for business owners. The information is arranged by number of workers to give information on minimum administrative requirements under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. It also contains direct links to the mandatory posting and training requirements, along with other resources to support small businesses.

Small business resources

The ministry and system partners continue to encourage small businesses to use the Small Business Toolkit, a step-by-step approach to starting a health and safety program. In 2019-20, the toolkit was downloaded over 1,200 times. The toolkit is available from [Infrastructure Health and Safety Association](#) (IHSA) (PDF), [Public Services Health and Safety Association](#) (PSHSA) (PDF), [Workplace Safety and Prevention Services](#) (WSPS) or [Workplace Safety North](#) (WSN) (PDF).

Likewise, the [health and safety representative](#) (HSR) basic training guidelines and eLearning program, has provided training to over 760 participants across more than 230 workplaces. The training is available through the [Infrastructure Health and Safety Association](#), [Public Services Health and Safety Association](#), [Workplace Safety and Prevention Services](#) and [Workplace Safety North](#).

The ministry has worked with system partners on the development of plans to evaluate the uptake and effectiveness of this program. The ministry is also reviewing options to promote this training among small businesses to increase uptake.

Small business outreach with summer students

From May to July 2019, over 11,000 small businesses were visited by 30 summer students across Ontario (Newmarket, Greater Toronto Area, St. Catharines, Hamilton, London, Ottawa and Timmins). The most visited sectors were retail, restaurants, personal and household services and professional medical offices. Nearly all small business owners accepted the resources offered by the students and one out of five agreed to complete a survey. Close to 2,500 businesses wanted to keep in touch with the ministry by registering for the ministry's newsletter or participating in the summer student's research.

Acting as the ministry's ambassadors, students offered and presented the free printed resources on the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (ESA). Some materials

were translated and presented by students in other languages including French, Tamil, Cantonese and Mandarin. While presenting the ministry's [updated](#) webpage, students also introduced new ergonomics posters with small businesses. The final versions of the posters were later added to the [Quick Start Guideline](#): Office as part of the [Musculoskeletal Disorders Prevention Guideline for Ontario](#) for small businesses.

In addition to sharing the ministry's materials, summer students also provided information and resources from Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Workplace Safety and Prevention Services and the Institute for Work and Health.

Workplace vulnerability

The ministry continues to address the occupational health and safety needs of workers at increased risk for workplace accidents, injuries or diseases. During consultations for the next Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Strategy, one of the discussion topics included barriers to workplace health, safety and well-being. Factors causing workplace vulnerability were noted during the meetings, including temporary and precarious work, chemical exposures and the challenges in accessing health and safety information.

To continue understanding workplace vulnerability, the Operations Division created a Workplace Vulnerability Working Group with the OHS system partners. The purpose was to share information and to identify opportunities for potential collaborations.

Young workers

Building on the research conducted in 2018, priorities for CPO-directed programs in 2019-20 included young workers and manufacturing. Manufacturing has been identified as one of the sectors where young workers were more likely to be injured, and other sectors include administration, waste management and construction ^[1] ^[2] Workplace Safety and Prevention Services (WSPS) will examine how to reduce lost-time injuries among young workers employed in the manufacturing sector in the Windsor-Essex area, with a focus on "struck by objects" injuries.

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) has also been consulting with the Ministry of Education to incorporate occupational health and safety into school curricula. Both ministries are exploring other opportunities to increase health and safety awareness and training for youth.

Promoting mental health, preventing mental injury

The moral and business case for supporting mental health in the workplace is clear. An estimated 500,000 workers in Canada are unable to come to work each week due to poor mental health. ^[3] Further, the annual economic cost of poor mental health in Canadian workplaces is at least \$50 billion. ^[4]

Throughout the past year, system partners continued to provide tools and services to help employers promote mental well-being and prevent psychological injury in the workplace. Two CPO-directed projects focused on mental health in the workplace. Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA), in partnership with McMaster University, is delivering Beyond Silence training sessions on an ongoing basis. Participants in health care and public safety sectors are trained on how to promote psychological health and safety in their workplaces. Additionally, PSHSA and partners developed the [Beyond Silence App](#), which is designed to be a "coach in your pocket," providing accessible, high-quality, confidential information and mental health support to health care workers in small and large organizations.

The system also worked together over the last year to prevent violence and harassment in the workplace. For example, the ministry published on its website the new workplace violence prevention guide for hospitals, long-term care and home care workplaces.

[Workplace Violence Prevention in Health Care: A Guide to the Law](#) will help workplaces understand their responsibilities when it comes to workplace violence. In addition to raising awareness around this issue, the ministry continued to enforce the requirements relating to harassment and violence prevention policies in the workplace.

Moreover, the ministry heard from the public and our system partners during the spring 2019 Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) strategy consultations that mental health in the workplace is a serious issue which we must do more to address. The workplace mental health system working group, which includes representatives from the health and safety associations (HSAs), Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and the ministry, highlighted the need for strategic system collaboration to improve mental health outcomes in the workplace.

Ergonomics – musculoskeletal disorders

Poor ergonomics in the workplace can lead to musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). Musculoskeletal disorders is an umbrella term for several injuries and disorders of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, bone and nerves. Musculoskeletal disorders cause pain and disability for workers and lead to high costs for workers and businesses. According to the WSIB, MSDs make up approximately one-third of all allowed lost-time claims.

In October 2018, the Centre of Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders (CRE-MSD) launched Ontario's new [Musculoskeletal disorders Prevention Guideline](#) along with an accompanying website.

The guideline gives employers free information and tools to prevent MSDs in their workplace.

In 2018, the guideline was divided into three sections:

1. a [Quick Start Guide for small and micro businesses](#)
2. a [Basic Guideline for medium-sized organizations](#)
3. a [Comprehensive Guideline for large organizations](#)

The Quick Start Guide, which supports small businesses by providing a simple tool to prevent MSDs, can also be used by any workplace. It contains free posters and information that workplaces of all sizes can use.

In 2019, a companion document, the [Office Quick Start Guide](#), was added to the guideline. Its purpose is to help businesses improve office work and help prevent pain at work.

Centre of Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders (CRE-MSD) received funding from MLTSD in 2019. The organization continues collaborating with system partners and seeking input from Ontario businesses and workers in its efforts to keep the guideline up to date.

Compliance plans and blitzes

Healthy Workers in Healthy Workplaces initiative

In the fall of 2019, the ministry led the Healthy Workers in Healthy Workplaces compliance blitz focusing on musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards. The initiative consisted of two phases.

The first phase was education, outreach and awareness conducted in collaboration with the health and safety associations. The purpose was to raise awareness and provide training and resources for employers.

The second phase was an inspection blitz. Inspectors visited workplaces in the construction, health care, industrial and mining sectors. There were two purposes. One was to check that employers were complying with

the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA). The other was to protect workers by assessing and addressing musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards.

[Read the full report](#)

Safe At Work Ontario (SAWO) – Annual sector-specific compliance plans

As part of SAWO, the ministry's Operations Division develops annual sector-specific compliance plans to guide the work of inspectors and their proactive visits. Plans are developed for four sectors as well as specialized services:

- [industrial sector](#)
- [construction sector](#)
- [mining sector](#)
- [health care sector](#)
- [specialized professional services](#)

The plans include details about the ministry's planned health and safety initiatives. Each year, inspectors conduct proactive blitzes and enforcement activities that target hazards and identify workplace concerns in workplaces in each sector.

The 2019-2020 initiatives are described in more detail in the following sections. More information can be found on the [schedule for ministry health and safety enforcement initiatives](#).

Industrial Health and Safety Program

The Industrial Health and Safety Program is the largest and most varied of the ministry's four occupational health and safety programs. The program enforces the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations in 29 subsectors. Most workers in provincially regulated workplaces in Ontario are covered by the Industrial Health and Safety Program.

Industrial health and safety blitzes

In 2019-2020, ministry inspectors conducted four inspection blitzes. The blitzes focused on reducing hazards related to slips, trips and falls, musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards, machine guarding and new and young workers.

Slips, trips and falls

During a health and safety blitz on slips, trips and falls from March 18 to July 12, 2019, ministry inspectors checked that employers assessed for slip, trip and falls hazards and controlled for them (for example, through posting appropriate signs and good housekeeping practices).

[Read the full report](#)

Musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards

During a health and safety blitz focusing on musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards from September 1 to December 27, 2019, ministry inspectors focused on hazards that may lead to MSDs during manual materials handling activities, and on helping workplaces eliminate or control those hazards. In industrial establishment

workplaces, inspectors will focus on activities that may pose respiratory hazards, including vapours, fumes and particulates.

Machine guarding

During a health and safety blitz from January 20 to March 31, 2020, ministry inspectors focused on machine guarding, locking and blocking, electrical hazards, power line contact and the internal responsibility system. Electrical workers can also be at risk of a major electrical hazard if improper lockout procedures are used when working on energized electrical equipment.

[Read the full report](#)

New and young workers

From May 1 to August 30, 2019, inspectors visited industrial workplaces that hired new and young workers in sectors such as retail, restaurants, food, beverage and tobacco, tourism, hospitality and recreational services. Inspectors focused on workplaces that were newly registered with the WSIB and hadn't had a proactive health and safety visit in the five years prior.

[Read the full report](#)

Construction Program

Construction is a dynamic industry comprising several primary sectors, each with subsectors. Activities vary widely on construction projects, with workplaces and workforces that change constantly. At a typical project, there can be multiple employers and trade unions on site. These workplaces are quite different from those in other industries.

Most construction contractors in Ontario are small-to-mid-size employers. Many construction employers have fewer than eight employees. Some construction employers have more than 100 workers, often working across several projects.

Construction inspectors enforce compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and regulations at construction projects across the province. As part of the SAWQ strategy, they focus on construction sectors with high injury rates, a history of non-compliance and known workplace hazards.

Construction health and safety blitzes

In 2019-2020, ministry inspectors conducted four inspection blitzes. They focused on reducing risks related to slips, trips and falls, suspended access equipment, musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards, and personal protective equipment.

Slips, trips and falls

During a health and safety blitz on slips, trips and falls from March 18 to July 12, 2019, ministry inspectors checked that employers assessed for slip, trip and fall hazards and controlled for them (for example, through posting appropriate signs and good housekeeping practices).

[Read the full report](#)

Suspended access equipment

Between July 2 and September 27, 2019, the ministry conducted a health and safety blitz focused on suspended access equipment on construction sites across the province.

[Read the full report](#)

Musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards

Between September 1 and December 27, 2019, ministry inspectors conducted an enforcement blitz focusing on musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards across the province.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Between January 6 and March 18, 2020, ministry inspectors conducted a province-wide enforcement blitz focusing on personal protective equipment.

[Read the full report](#)

Mining Program

Ontario has about 40 underground mines with about 25,000 workers, located mostly in northern Ontario. Minerals such as copper, nickel, gold and other precious metals, diamonds, salt and gypsum are extracted from them.

Ontario also has several thousand surface open pits, quarries, and sand and gravel operations, with about 10,000 workers. Minerals such as gold, as well as material such as limestone, sand and gravel, are extracted from them. There is also a materials-testing laboratory.

Mining health and safety blitzes

In 2019-2020, ministry inspectors conducted four inspection blitzes. The blitzes focused on reducing hazards related to slips, trips and falls, ground control, emergency preparedness and self-audit, and musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards.

Slips, trips and falls

During a health and safety blitz on slips, trips and falls from March 18 to July 12, 2019, ministry inspectors checked that employers assessed for slip, trip and falls hazards and controlled for them in mines and mining plants across the province (for example, through posting appropriate signs and good housekeeping practices).

[Read the full report](#)

Ground control

From July 15 to September 27, 2019, the ministry conducted proactive inspections on ground control plans (unsupported underground openings, ground support quality control and ground instability record-keeping), mine design, communication programs, procedures for installation of ground support and quality control programs in mines and mining plants across the province.

[Read the full report](#)

Emergency preparedness and self-audit

From December 16, 2019, to March 17, 2020, the ministry conducted a self-audit initiative that covered underground fires, fire drills, escape ways, secondary accesses, checks of risk registry for potential emergencies and mine rescue, refuge stations, remote worksites and emergency preparedness.

Musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards

Between September 1 and December 27, 2019, ministry inspectors conducted an enforcement blitz focusing on musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards across the province.

Materials Testing Laboratory

The ministry's Mining Program also operates the Materials Testing Laboratory in Sudbury, which tests steel mine hoist ropes used to hoist conveyances in underground mine shafts. Under the [mines and mining plants regulation](#) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), mine operators that use hoist ropes must have their ropes regularly tested by an approved laboratory. In 2019-2020 the Materials Testing Laboratory tested 789 rope samples from Ontario, as well as from across Canada and around the world.

Health Care Program

Health care workers provide daily care to millions of Ontarians in a variety of settings that include hospitals, long-term care centres and homes. The hazards facing health care workers can be complex and require a steadfast commitment to workplace health and safety. The ministry's Health Care Program covers health and community care services in seven settings:

- long-term care homes (homes for nursing care)
- retirement homes (homes for residential care)
- hospitals
- nursing services
- supported group living residences and other facilities (group homes)
- treatment clinics and specialized services
- professional offices and agencies

In 2019-2020, health care inspectors focused on slips, trips and falls, workplace violence prevention, group homes, and musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards, along with their general inspection duties and field visits.

Health care health and safety blitzes

Slips, trips and falls

Between March 18 and July 12, 2019, ministry inspectors checked that employers assessed for slip, trip and fall hazards and controlled for them (for example, through posting appropriate signs and good housekeeping practices) in health care workplaces across the province.

[Read the full report](#)

Workplace violence prevention

From July 22 to September 27, 2019, the ministry focused on workplace violence prevention in long-term care, retirement homes and community care workplaces to raise awareness of workplace hazards and promote compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

[Read the full report](#)

Group homes

From January 20 to March 13, 2020, the ministry conducted an initiative on group homes. “Group homes” are primarily engaged in providing residential care for people who require care or support, including people with developmental disabilities, mental health disabilities or substance abuse problems. They include intensive supported residences, supported group living residences and other facilities that provide support to clients and residents in residential settings.

Musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards

Between September 1 and December 27, 2019, ministry inspectors conducted an enforcement blitz focusing on musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards across the province.

Specialized Professional Services Program

The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development's (MLTSDs) Specialized Professional Services Program provides technical support and expertise to regional staff in the industrial, construction, mining and health care programs in five key areas:

- ergonomics
- occupational hygiene
- engineering
- radiation protection services
- emergency management

Ergonomics health and safety blitzes

Ergonomics focuses on the interaction between workers and such workplace elements as equipment, workstations, work processes and the environment. Ministry ergonomists provide technical support to inspectors and conduct inspections focusing on ergonomics to protect workers from ergonomics-related hazards. In 2019-2020, ergonomists provided technical support to several ministry inspection blitzes, including the musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory hazards cross-program blitz. They also conducted an ergonomics-specific blitz that focused on ergonomics in municipalities.

Ergonomics – municipalities

Phase 1 of this initiative started on April 1, 2018, and included compliance assistance for municipalities by the ministry and PSHSA.

Blitz inspections started on April 1, 2019, and MLTSD ergonomists performed an administrative review and physical inspection(s) for each municipality visited. The administrative review focused on the entire municipality, while the physical inspection focused on the public works department.

The blitz was scheduled to continue until March 31, 2020. It was later extended to September 30, 2020, but was put on hold due to the pandemic. A full report for the blitz will be scheduled at a later date.

Occupational hygiene

Occupational hygienists (OH) provide professional and technical support to the industrial, construction, mining and health care sector programs. Through inspections, investigations and industry-wide air quality surveys, the

OH recognizes and evaluates the risk factors that contribute to occupational diseases and illnesses among workers.

To control exposures, the OH enforces the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and specific regulations, including [Regulation 490/09: Designated Substances](#), [Regulation 833: Control of Exposure to Biological or Chemical Agents](#), [Regulation 632/05: Confined Spaces](#), [Regulation 278/05: Asbestos on Construction Projects and in Buildings and Repair Operations](#), [Regulation 860: Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System](#), and the [Hazardous Products Act](#) and federal [Hazardous Products Regulations](#).

Engineering

Field staff receive technical support from professional engineers who provide specialized services. This helps to ensure workplaces in Ontario are safe. These engineers take part in accident investigations and provide reports on the root cause of the accident that could be used in legal proceedings. Engineers also take part in the development of regulations, internal and external guidance documents, and Canadian Standards Association standards.

Engineers supported field inspectors during blitzes by providing technical support through phone consultations, development of training materials, and participating in field visits.

Radiation Protection Service

The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development's (MLTSDs) Radiation Protection Service provides technical support and expertise to regional staff on all aspects of ionizing and non-ionizing radiation.

Radiation Protection Service focus

Radiation safety is devoted to minimizing occupational radiation exposure to workers. The ministry's radiation protection officers conduct proactive radiation safety inspections and reactive radiation exposure investigations and provide support to inspectors. In 2019-2020, they focused on dental X-ray installations in open treatment areas at veterinary facilities, workplaces that have outstanding "rejected" applications for installation of an X-ray source, and workplaces with X-ray sources that have never been inspected.

Radiation Protection Service Laboratory

The Radiation Protection Service Laboratory in Toronto samples, tests and monitors food and environmental samples for radiation around nuclear installations in and surrounding Ontario. The testing is conducted as part of the Order-in-Council responsibilities assigned to the ministry under the Provincial Nuclear Emergency Response Plan (PNERP). The laboratory also conducts radio analysis of drinking water for the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks in support of the Drinking Water Surveillance Program. Over the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the laboratory tested 1,501 samples, performing 1,997 analyses.

Emergency Management

As the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) has Order-in-Council responsibilities under the *Emergency Management & Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA), we have ensured that all emergency response plans and related emergency management documents are current and up to date. In addition, for 2019-20, MLTSD has achieved certification as compliant with EMCPA requirements through the [Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management](#) annual review & certification process.

The Emergency Management Program of the MLTSD has been instrumental during the COVID-19 pandemic in liaising information between Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) and the Ministry of Labour,

Training and Skills Development's, (MLTSD's) Ministry Action Group (MAG), as well as planning, scheduling regular meetings and coordinating with various ministries.

The future of health and safety in Ontario

A message from the Chief Prevention Officer

Moving forward, our ministry will continue to build our system in an integrated way, and the 2021-26 Occupational health & safety strategy will provide us with an overarching blueprint with which to do so. During the 2019-20 fiscal year, the ministry worked with its health and safety system partners to develop this. Our ministry held in-person and online public consultations to gather feedback from Ontarians to develop the next strategy, scheduled for release by the end of 2020. The information gathered from the consultations was considered in addition to research, data and analysis, Dr. Paul Demers' independent review, titled "[Using scientific evidence and principles to help determine the work-relatedness of cancer](#)", and the recommendations outlined in the [Office of the Auditor General of Ontario's 2019 Annual Report](#).

The strategy is meant to guide the work of our ministry's divisions, its health and safety system partners, and the broader health and safety network in aligning occupational health and safety foundations, and workplace health and safety culture in general, in Ontario — particularly as the province reopens and adapts to a "new normal" after the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Ontario has had the lowest [lost-time injury rate](#) in Canada over the past decade, the need to address occupational illnesses, including COVID-19, is more important than ever. The new strategy sets specific goals and objectives for the occupational health and safety system, determines high-priority areas of focus, and outlines how we will measure success. We also look forward to recognizing [Ontario's safe employers](#) and to further integration of our ministry of "work."

We will continue to support efforts to keep COVID-19 in check by supporting workplaces and the economy. We will do so by:

- collaborating with occupational health and safety system partners and the Ministry of Health to ensure employers know how to protect workers from COVID-19. This includes developing and updating general and sector-specific guidance and other resources that align with public health advice
- supporting the delivery of essential services and key enablers of work such as child care, education and transportation through appropriate and up-to-date guidance
- promoting knowledge and understanding of infection prevention and control measures and how they fit within an occupational health and safety framework

We will also continue to support government by:

- participating in decision-making and advisory tables with other ministries and stakeholders to help ensure that government is informed and aligned
- making evidence-based recommendations on policy matters related to COVID-19 occupational health and safety issues
- supporting multi-jurisdictional data collection and analysis initiatives to help implement rapid evidence-based responses to newly emerging situations

I am confident we will be able to make Ontario one of the safest jurisdictions in the world.

- **Ron Kelusky**
Chief Prevention Officer, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Appendix

Legislative and regulatory amendments

The ministry regularly reviews the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its health and safety regulations to ensure they are current and reflect changing realities in the workplace. From April 2019 through March 2020, the following changes became effective.

Repeal of section 34 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*

Section 34 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* was repealed in late 2019. This removed the requirement under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to notify the ministry of a person's intent to manufacture, distribute or supply a new biological or chemical agent in Ontario. Businesses are already required to report new chemicals to the federal government and must comply with the national workplace hazardous material information system for all hazardous products in the workplace. Revoking the OHSA requirement removed an unnecessary burden on these businesses without impacting workplace safety.

Amendments to sections 7.6 and 7.7 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*

Amendments to sections 7.6 and 7.7 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* were made in 2019 to allow the C.P.Q. to amend training requirements for certified members of joint health and safety committees, establish conditions that committee members must meet to maintain certification, and allow the C.P.Q. to set validity periods for certification.

Amendments to *Ontario Regulation 297/13 (Occupational Health and Safety Awareness and Training)*

Effective March 27, 2020, the validity period of working at heights training for workers who successfully completed an approved program between February 28, 2017 and August 31, 2017 was extended to help lessen the impact of the reduced number of training classes offered during the pandemic. The validity period for these workers was extended to four years from the original three.

Occupational health regulatory modernization amendments

Effective January 1, 2020, new amendments streamlining and modernizing the occupational health regulatory scheme under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* took effect. This includes [*Regulation 833 – Control of Exposure to Biological or Chemical Agents*](#) and [*Ontario Regulation 490/09 – Designated Substances*](#).

These amendments:

- replace the nine separate Medical Surveillance Codes with one single consolidated and updated [Medical Surveillance Code](#)
- replace the 16 separate codes for respiratory equipment and measuring airborne substances with new, updated and consolidated respiratory protection and measuring provisions
- permit businesses to use the “Quebec model” for calculating exposures to hazardous substances for irregular work shifts
- add “substitution” (substituting hazardous substances with those that are less hazardous) to the hierarchy of controls

Changes to medical surveillance provisions for asbestos – exposed workers subject to *Ontario Regulation 278/05 – Asbestos on Construction Projects and in Buildings and Repair Operations*

Effective January 1, 2020, [Ontario Regulation 278/05 – Asbestos on Construction Projects and in Buildings and Repair Operations](#) was amended by [Ontario Regulation 450/19](#). This harmonizes the frequency of medical surveillance for asbestos-exposed workers subject to *Ontario Regulation 278/05* with the provisions that apply to asbestos-exposed workers subject to *Ontario Reg. 490/09 – Designated Substances*.

Temporary stairs regulatory amendment

The ~~MLTSD~~ clarified existing requirements for temporary stairs (section 75-77) as set out in the [Construction Projects regulation \(Ontario Reg. 213/91\)](#) under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. A regulatory amendment was made to clarify when temporary stairs are required and not required on a construction project so employers can better comply with the laws and workers are better protected from the hazard of falls. The amendments came into effect on January 1, 2020.

Electrical utility safety rules

The reference in the *Construction Projects Regulation (Ontario Reg. 213/91)* to the Electrical Utility Safety Rules (EUSR) was updated to the most recent version published in 2019 by Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA).

Industrial establishments regulation amendments

Effective July 1, 2019, amendments to [Regulation 851 – Industrial Establishments](#) helped modernize workplace health and safety requirements that apply to Ontario industrial establishments, including offices, factories, arenas, and shops.

They increased flexibility by:

- allowing the use of alternative procedures if worker health and safety is at least as well protected
- allowing workers to wear personal flotation devices instead of lifejackets when appropriate
- allowing the use of antidotes, flushing fluids or washes instead of eyewash fountains or emergency showers, where appropriate, to prevent permanent injury to the eyes or skin

Oil and gas, offshore regulation amendments

Amendments to [Regulation 855 – Oil and Gas](#), Offshore modernized requirements for life jackets and specific electrical equipment that is installed and used on offshore oil and gas rigs. The amendments came into effect on July 1, 2019.

Automobile manufacturer regulation amendments

In 2019, changes were made to regulations that apply to auto manufacturers. One was to [Regulation 297/13 – Occupational Health and Safety Awareness and Training](#). This amendment results in an exemption for workers performing construction work at a factory that manufactures or assembles automobiles and are directly employed by an employer that operates such a plant, so they are no longer required to have working at heights training that is approved by the CPQ. Another change is to [Regulation 213/91 – Construction Projects](#). Before the amendment, the ministry needed to be notified of a construction project at an auto plant if the construction project had an estimated cost of \$50,000 or higher. Now, the project cost threshold for construction at auto plants is \$250,000. The intent of these amendments is to reduce red tape and costs for auto manufacturer employers.

Mines and mining plants regulation amendments

Amendments to [Regulation 854 – Mines and Mining Plants](#) that help modernize mining regulations came into effect on July 1, 2019.

The amendments:

- harmonized the definition of non-destructive test with *Ontario Regulation 213/91 – Construction Projects* and amended related requirements
- reduced regulatory burden by revoking several redundant or duplicate provisions
- updated references to recognized industry standards
- increased flexibility by amending requirements relating to the maximum height of working faces at surface mines and transportation of oxygen and acetylene containers underground
- updated terminology and clarified certain requirements

More information on recent and past regulatory amendments is available through the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development [Notices](#) page.

Statistics

Ontario's workforce

As of April 2020 there were about 7.4 million workers employed in Ontario – 6.8 million of these workers were employed in workplaces under [provincial jurisdiction](#).

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total number of workers in Ontario (in millions)	6.9	7.0	7.1	7.2	7.4
Number under provincial jurisdiction (in millions)	6.4	6.4	6.6	6.7	6.8

Fatalities

In 2019, there were 73 fatalities from traumatic injuries in Ontario, as well as 117 fatalities from occupational disease that were compensated by the [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board](#)

The sectors with the most traumatic fatalities were construction (32%), transportation (16%) and manufacturing (10%).

For occupational disease, the sectors with the highest numbers are construction (26%), manufacturing (20%) and primary metals (12%).

Injuries

Compensated injuries

Since 2009, Ontario has had the lowest frequency of [lost-time injury claims](#) in Canada.

In 2019, for workplaces under [Schedule 1 \(employers that must contribute to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board \(WSIB\) insurance fund\)](#), there were 49,029 allowed lost-time injury claims (0.98 per 100 workers) and 115,787 allowed no lost-time injury claims (2.32 per 100 workers). The sectors with the most allowed lost-time claims are services (32%), health care (17%) and manufacturing (15%). The sectors with the highest rates of allowed lost-time injury claims are transportation (1.87 per 100 workers), agriculture (1.78 per 100 workers) and municipal (1.64 per 100 workers).

In 2019, for workplaces under [Schedule 2 \(self-insured businesses\)](#), there were 16,635 allowed lost-time injury claims (2.2 per 100 workers) and 15,316 allowed no lost-time injury claims (2.03 per 100 workers).

Critical injuries

[Critical injuries](#) at the workplace must be reported directly to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

In 2019, 2,398 [critical injuries](#) were reported to the ministry. Of those, 2,050 of those were in industrial, 307 were in construction and 41 were in mining sector workplaces.

Training

Between April 1, 2015, and March 31, 2020, CPO-approved training providers have trained over 877,000 workers on working at heights for the construction sector. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year alone, over 204,000 workers completed working at heights training or refresher training.

Up to March 31, 2020, over 59,000 individuals have been fully certified as joint health and safety committee members, meaning they successfully completed their Part 1 and 2 training. During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, over 18,000 people completed their Part 1 training, more than 16,000 completed Part 2 to become fully certified and over 4,500 completed refresher training.

The Prevention Office also digitized CPO-approved training records and made them securely available via the Certification Management System (CMS). Over 228,000 new learner accounts were created between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year alone, over 255,000 new certifications or records of completion were issued. From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020, the CMS received over 1,400 requests for new employer accounts.

From April 2019 through March 2020, the health and safety associations provided over 1,077,075 participant hours of training on a variety of workplace health and safety topics.

Enforcement

Occupational health and safety inspectors visit workplaces to provide information and conduct inspections to ensure that the workplace is in compliance with health and safety legislation. If a workplace is not in compliance, the inspector may issue an order and the employer must correct the problem within a certain timeframe. If the problem poses an immediate threat to worker health and safety, the inspector may issue a stop work order, which means that work stops until the problem is corrected.

Inspectors also do consultations, which may happen before a workplace inspection. An inspector may discuss the purpose of their visit with the employer and/or joint health and safety committee members/worker health and safety representative and may request information from the workplace parties to prepare for their next visit.

Total inspections

In 2019-2020, ministry inspectors made a total of 81,000 visits to 39,000 workplaces and issued 110,000 orders. Of those orders, 7,000 were stop use or stop work orders.

Proactive inspections

Proactive inspections are unannounced field visits conducted to improve safety and prevent injuries or fatalities. At proactive visits, inspectors:

- monitor compliance with occupational health and safety legislation
- promote the internal responsibility system
- advise workplace parties of their rights, duties and responsibilities
- discuss requirements of the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA) and its regulations

In 2019-2020, 55% of the field visits (45,000) were proactive visits.

There were 76,340 orders issued during proactive visits, which accounted for 69% of all orders issued.

Reactive inspections

Reactive inspections are field visits conducted to investigate a fatality, critical injury, work refusal, complaint, occupational disease or other health and safety-related event in the workplace. Reactive visits are a critical part of inspectors' work.

In 2019-2020, there were 36,500 reactive field visits where inspectors issued 34,000 orders. Over the past decade, the number of reactive field visits has increased from 23,979 in 2009-2010 to 36,500 in 2019-20.

Data on occupational health and safety field visits, workplaces visited and orders issued can be found [here](#).

System finances

Investments – By category

In 2019-2020, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and system partners continued to invest approximately \$300 million to support the implementation of the integrated health and safety strategy.

Occupational health and safety investments (\$ millions)

Occupational health and safety investments (\$ millions)

Investment category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Transfers to health and safety associations	90.8	91.92	93.61	90.86	80.67
Health and Safety Association Self-generated revenue	27.9	28.37	28.29	28.37	27.6
Enforcement	96.7	96.2	103.1	103.4	97.9
Legislation/regulation development	2.2	2.5	2.9	4	4.0
Agencies	15.3	15.5	15.5	15.6	15.9
Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development Prevention Organization	14.4	13.3	12.7	13.1	13.8
Prevention grants	2	4	3.25	2.92	1.20
Research	9.6	8.75	8.38	7.27	6.87
Workplace Health and Safety Services	3	3	4.2	4.9	7
Small Business Health and Safety Programs – rebates	0.8	0.9	1	0.5	0.3
Safety Groups Program rebates ^[5]	39.3	28.8	29.4	29	32
Total	302	293.24	302.33	299.92	287.24

Sources

Transfers to Health and Safety Associations (HSAs): Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development Transfer Payment Agreements (TPAs) with HSAs 2015-2016 to 2019-2020.

Health and Safety Association Self-Generated Revenue: HSAs audited financial statements 2015-2016 to 2019-2020.

Enforcement, Legislation and Regulation Development, Agencies, Ministry of Labour Prevention Organization: Government of Ontario IFIS Database 2015-2016 to 2019-2020.

Prevention Grants: Transfer Payment Agreements between the ministry and the grant recipients 2015-2016 to 2019-2020.

Research: Figures are based on the TPAs between the ministry and the grant recipients 2015-2016 to 2019-2020.

Workplace Health and Safety Services: WSIB Prevention Program Statistics for 2015 to 2019.

Small Business Health and Safety Programs, Safety Group Program Rebates: WSIB Prevention Program Statistics for 2015 to 2019.

Notes

Other than “Legislation and Regulation Development and Health” and “Safety Association Self-Generated Revenue”, all investments in occupational health and safety are funded by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board through a portion of employer premiums.

“Agencies” includes investments associated with the Office of the Worker Adviser, Office of the Employer Adviser and the associated administration.

“Health and Safety Association Self-Generated Revenue” are those generated by the health and safety associations through the sale of occupational health and safety products and services, bank interest income and investments of future benefits funds. These revenues are reinvested into the health and safety system.

Health and Safety Association expenditures

The chart below states total actual spending by health and safety association. For each health and safety association, most expenditures are directed to training, consulting and clinical services.

Health and Safety Association expenditures, 2019-2020 (\$ Millions)

Occupational health and safety investments (\$ millions)

Association	Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA)	Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)	Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHA)	Workers Health & Safety Centre (WHSC)	Workplace Safety North (WSN)	Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS)	Total
Training	15.13	N/A	3.56	8.82	3.31	15.41	46.23
Consulting	8.01	N/A	3.73	N/A	2.96	13.69	28.39
Clinical	N/A	6.45	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.45
Products	2.57	N/A	1.61	N/A	0.10	4.10	8.38

Association	Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA)	Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)	Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA)	Workers Health & Safety Centre (WHSC)	Workplace Safety North (WSN)	Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS)	Total
Mine rescue program	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5.95	N/A	5.95
Occupational disease	N/A	1.27	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.27
Priority focus	0.38	N/A	0.72	N/A	0.57	2.26	3.93
Corporate services	3.74	1.08	1.24	2.19	1.70	7.70	17.65
Capital investments	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.23	N/A	0.23
Total	29.83	8.8	10.86	11.01	14.82	43.16	118.48

Sources

Health and Safety Associations' 2019-2020 Financial Reports to Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Notes

Totals include expenditures from self-generated revenue.

Numbers provided for Workers Health & Safety Centre (WHSC) are based on unaudited financial reports.

“Mine Rescue Program” is established pursuant to the direction of the Minister of Labour under Section 17 of *Mines and Mining Plants, Revised Regulations of Ontario 1990 – Regulation 854*

Data limitations

The occupational health and safety data in this report is limited, as:

- ministry enforcement data may change as a result of ongoing enforcement activities and investigations
- additional records could be added to the source databases after extraction, which would not be included in this report. This report is accurate as of the date the data was extracted

System partner annual reports

More information on the work done by the system partners can be found in their annual reports through the links below.

- [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board](#) (WSIB)
- [Infrastructure Health and Safety Association](#) (IHSA) (PDF)
- [Public Services Health & Safety Association](#) (PSHSA)
- [Workplace Safety & Prevention Services](#) (WSPS)
- [Workplace Safety North](#) (WSN)

- [The Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers](#) (OHCOW)
- [Workers Health and Safety Centre](#) (WHSC)
- [Institute for Work & Health](#) (IWH)
- [Centre for Research in Occupational Safety and Health](#) (CROSH)
- [Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease](#) (CREOD)

Contact information

Ontario provides a toll-free province-wide telephone number to report unsafe work practices and workplace health and safety incidents. Call the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development Health and Safety Contact Centre at Toll-free: 1-877-202-0008.

Call any time to report critical injuries, fatalities or work refusals.

For general inquiries about workplace health and safety, call between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

In an emergency, always call 911 immediately.

Footnotes

- [1] ^ Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Enterprise Information Warehouse (EIW), Allowed Lost-Time Injuries of young workers in 2016.
- [2] ^ Statistics Canada. [Table 14-10-0023-01 Labour force characteristics by industry, annual \(\$\times 1,000\$ \)](#).
- [3] ^ The [ROI in workplace mental health](#) programs: Good for people, good for business. Deloitte Insights, 2019.
- [4] ^ Ibid.
- [5] ^ The bottom three categories (Workplace Health and Safety Services, Small Business Health and Safety Programs – rebates and Safety Groups Program – rebates) are reported by calendar year (January 1 to December 31). All other categories are reported by fiscal year starting in the year listed in the header (April 1 to March 31).