

Personal Emergency Leave for All Workers

Province Proposes 10 days of Personal Emergency Leave, Includes Two Days of Paid Leave

June 8, 2017 10:08 A.M.

Ontario is taking historic action to create more opportunity and security for workers with a plan for [Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs](#). As part of this plan, the government will expand personal emergency leave to include an across-the-board minimum of at least two paid days per year for all workers.

Over the past three years, Ontario's economy has outperformed all G7 countries in terms of real GDP growth. While exports and business investments are increasing and the unemployment rate is at a 16-year low, the nature of work has changed. Many workers are struggling to support their families on part-time, contract or minimum-wage work. Government has a responsibility to ensure Ontario workers are protected by updating the province's labour and employment laws.

Minister of Labour Kevin Flynn and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Dr. Eric Hoskins were at Women's College Hospital in Toronto today to talk about the government's Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, introduced last week. If passed, the legislation will make the following changes, starting on January 1, 2018:

- All employees would receive 10 days of personal emergency leave (PEL) per year, including two paid PEL days.
- Employers would be prohibited from requesting a sick note from an employee taking personal emergency leave.
- The reasons for taking personal emergency leave would be expanded so that employees experiencing domestic or sexual violence, or the threat of sexual or domestic violence, could take the leave. This is in addition to the existing reasons that PEL days may be taken, which include illness, injury or other urgent matters related to an individual or certain family members.

As part of the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, the government is also proposing to hike the minimum wage, ensure part-time workers are paid the same hourly wage as full-time workers, expand family leaves and make certain that employees are not misclassified as independent contractors, so that they get the benefits they deserve. To enforce these changes, the province will hire up to 175 more employment standards officers and launch a program to educate both employees and small and medium-sized businesses about their rights and obligations under the Employment Standards Act.

Creating fair workplaces and better jobs across Ontario is part of our plan to grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives.

QUOTES

" Through our Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Plan, we are taking the next step toward making sure that every hard-working Ontarian can share in Ontario's prosperity. Increasing PEL days and expanding the rules around taking PEL days will help workers protect their health, care for family members, and help make ends meet."

- Kevin Flynn

Minister of Labour

" This proposed change in the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act means that employers are now banned from asking workers for a doctor's note when they call in sick, for the first ten personal emergency leave days a worker needs to take off each year. When you're sick with the flu or a bad cold, you should be at home getting rest, and the last place you want to be is in a doctor's office."

- Dr. Eric Hoskins

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

QUICK FACTS

- Today's announcement responds to the final report of the Changing Workplaces review, conducted by Special Advisors C. Michael Mitchell and John C. Murray over the past two years. It is the first-ever independent review of the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and Labour Relations Act, 1995.
- Personal emergency leave currently applies only in workplaces with 50 or more employees. Under the proposed amendments, this threshold would be eliminated.
- The report estimates that more than 30 per cent of Ontario workers were in precarious work in 2014. This type of employment makes it hard to earn a decent income and interferes with opportunities to enjoy decent working conditions and/or puts workers at risk.
- In 2016, the median hourly wage was \$13.00 for part-time workers and \$24.73 for full-time workers. Over the past 30 years, part-time work has grown to represent nearly 20 per cent of total employment.
- Currently, half of the workers in Ontario earning less than \$15 per hour are between the ages of 25 and 64, and the majority are women.
- More than a quarter of Ontario workers would receive a pay hike through the proposed increase to the minimum wage.
- Studies show that a higher minimum wage results in less employee turnover, which increases business productivity.
- Ontario is proposing a broad consultation process to gain feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders on the legislation it has introduced. To facilitate this consultation, the legislation was referred to committee after First Reading.
- Employees without private drug insurance will have access, starting January 1, 2018, to free medications for their children as part of OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare Program. This new drug benefit program will fully cover the cost of prescription medications for Ontarians aged 24 and under, who have OHIP coverage, regardless of family income. Employees who are 24 and under will also benefit from this program.

LEARN MORE

- The [Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017](#)
- [Proposed changes to Ontario's Employment and Labour Laws](#)
- [The Premier's remarks on the plan for Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs](#)
- [The Changing Workplaces Review — Full Final Report](#)
- [The Changing Workplaces Review — Summary Report](#)

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