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## GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE PAID SICK DAYS

No doubt you've already heard about the government of Ontario's proposed COVID19 Worker Income Protection Benefit. Amendments to the Employment Standards Act were introduced by the government on the afternoon of April 29th and fast tracked through the legislative process passing first, second and third readings in short order.

Employers that do not already provide sick leave benefits equal to or better than the proposed plan are required to provide their employees with up to three days of paid leave in an amount up to \$200 per day, because of certain reasons related to COVID-19, including:

- going for a COVID-19 test
- staying home awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test
- being sick with COVID-19
- going to get vaccinated
- experiencing a side effect from a COVID-19 vaccination
- having been advised to self-isolate due to COVID-19 by an employer, medical practitioner or other authority
- taking care of a dependent who is:
  - sick with COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19
  - self-isolating due to COVID-19

Employers who pay out this benefit can then apply to the WSIB (for some reason, the WSIB has been tasked with administering payments to employers, both those that already have a relationship with the WSIB and those that do not) for full reimbursement of the amount paid.

Unanswered questions include:

- will the \$200 per day attract employer health and welfare obligations under a collective bargaining agreement?
- How will the amount payable to a worker who is paid on the basis of piece-work be determined?

Full details are available at the following link:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-worker-income-protection-benefit>

## MINISTRY REPORTS ON CONSTRUCTION INSPECTIONS

### This Just in From the Ministry of Labour Training & Skills Development

Since the start of the pandemic, MLTSD has conducted over 18,300 COVID-19 related field visits in the construction program across Ontario and issued over 32,000 orders on those visits.

#### Stay Safe All Day: Construction Initiative

- Focused on compliance with COVID-19 precautions and ensuring that construction workplaces are following the Ministry of Health and Public Health guidance.
- Between February 2 and April 26, 2021, inspectors have conducted 3047 field visits at 2530 different workplaces, issuing a total of 6661 orders including 576 stop-work orders, and 102 requirements issued under OHSA.
- Some of the most common observations of non-compliance related to COVID-19 on construction projects are:
  - No physical distancing being maintained by workers on a project, including during breaks and lunch
  - Workers are not wearing masks when they are working within 2m of another worker
  - Cleaning not being done frequently in high-touch common areas, i.e. lunchroom/site trailers, shared tools & mobile equipment controls; nothing in place to monitor the frequency of cleaning
  - No active screening of workers or essential visitors before entering the project daily
  - Workers are not provided with the information or instruction regarding COVID-19 policies and procedures related to hygiene, physical distancing, cleaning and masking

### Compliance Assistance Team (CAT)

- In April 2020, MLTSD redeployed 30 Employment Standards Officers to visit construction sites to promote COVID-19 Health & Safety resources and collect information for OHS Inspectorate follow-up.
- To date, over 2,500 jobsites have been visited.

#### What inspectors are looking for

- The MLTSD construction program responds to inquiries regarding worker protections for COVID-19 and continues to investigate all complaints related to workplace health and safety to provide support, advice and enforcement.
- MLTSD occupational health and safety (OHS) inspectors in the Construction Program have been conducting risk-based proactive inspections at workplaces to check that employers understand the risks associated with COVID-19, including how to reduce spread in their workplace and that employers are implementing measures & procedures to keep workers safe.
- Inspectors are looking for things such as:
  - Cleaning of high touch common areas including lunchrooms/trailers, doorknobs, handrails, faucets, pin pads, mobile equipment controls and shared tools.
  - Screening of workers and essential visitors prior to entering the project.
  - Ensuring workers maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres, especially when taking breaks.
  - Ensuring workers are wearing appropriate masking and eye protection whenever they are within 2 metres of another person indoors or outdoors.

## COCA LOBBIES TO KEEP CONSTRUCTION OPEN

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COCA recently sent a letter to Premier Ford highlighting the stellar performance of construction throughout the pandemic and asking him to re-open the commercial element of the industry that was shutdown on April 17th. To soften any efforts on the part of the Opposition parties to shut down our industry even further, letters were also sent to the Leaders of the NDP, the Liberal Party of Ontario and the Green Party of Ontario informing them about the steps that have been taken to keep construction sites and workers safe and healthy and about the minimal incidences of virus transmission on work sites. [View the letter here.](#)

## WHICH VACCINE IS BEST – WATCH VIDEO

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If you think one brand of COVID19 vaccine is better than another, then watch this seven-minute Youtube video from Vox. It explains a lot about the various vaccines and their trials

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3odScka55A>

Although Vox's account seems impartial and non-partisan, here's a summary of their rating from Media Bias Fact Check in case you are concerned about media bias:

- Bias Rating: LEFT
- Factual Reporting: MOSTLY FACTUAL
- Country: USA (45/180 Press Freedom)
- Media Type: Website
- Traffic/Popularity: High Traffic
- MBFC Credibility Rating: HIGH CREDIBILITY

## WSIB DAY OF MOURNING CEREMONY

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Even though it was virtual, the WSIB hosted an appropriately somber and moving online ceremony recognizing the National Day of Mourning on April 28th. The National Day of Mourning is held every year on that day to recognize those who died or suffered workplace injuries or illnesses and to support the families that have been touched by these tragedies. It included remarks by Chair Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Labour Training and Skills Development Monte McNaughton, Acting President & CEO Tom Bell and an emotional story told by Virginia Campeau about the tragic and needless death of her husband Paul who in 2015 lost his life while operating a faulty highway sanding truck alone in the dead of winter in northern Ontario. The ceremony ended at 11:00 am exactly with the laying of a wreath by Witmer and Bell.

## RECENT POLLING REVEALS ONTARIO'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

### ABACUS

An Abacus poll of 817 Ontario residents conducted between April 9th and April 15th (before the most recent restrictions were imposed) and published on April 17, 2021 produced the following results:

- If an election was held at the time of the poll, 34% would vote PC (no change from January 2020 but down 7% from their June 2018 election), 34% would vote Liberal (up 5% from January 2020 and up 15% from the June 2018 election), 23% would vote NDP (down 2% from January 2020 and down 8% from the June 2018 election) 5% would vote Green (down 3% from January 2020) and 4% would vote "Other"
- 37% of respondents had a positive opinion of Doug Ford while 34% have a negative opinion for a net positive of 3% unchanged since the January poll
- 46% of respondents feel the provincial government has done a poor or terrible job of arranging vaccinations in a timely fashion
- 62% responded that the government is doing a fair or acceptable job finding the right balance between protecting health and the economy; 38% said poor or terrible
- 45% said that the COVID19 restrictions were not stringent enough

The full story of the Abacus survey which is accurate + or – 3.5% 19 times out of 20 is available at the following link: <https://abacusdata.ca/ontario-politics-doug-ford-covid/>

### INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

Another poll conducted by Innovative Research Group conducted between April 1st and April 13th and published on April 16, 2021 using a weighted sample of 800 Ontario residents revealed the following:

- 55% of respondents were dissatisfied (25% somewhat dissatisfied and 31% very dissatisfied) with the Ontario government while 42% (7% very satisfied, 35% somewhat satisfied) were satisfied
- A plurality of Ontarians are in the value clusters called "Business Liberals" (26%) and "Core Left" (22%)
- Doug Ford has a net favourability rating of -15, Steven Del Duca -8, Andrea Horwath -1 and Mike Shreiner +2

The full story can be found at

<https://innovativeresearch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CTM2104-Ontario-Report-Release-Deck.pdf>

### EKOS

EKOS Research had a poll in the field between April 7th and April 12th (also before the latest restrictions) using Interactive Voice Response (IVR) that questioned 1,240 Ontarians aged 18+ about their views on paid sick leave. Seems Ontarians overwhelmingly support paid sick leave. For the full story, click here:

<https://www.ekospolitics.com/index.php/2021/04/public-attitudes-to-paid-sick-leave-in-ontario/>

Ekos also asked about voter intentions, if a provincial election was held tomorrow, who would you vote for: 29.9% Liberal, 34.6% PC, 23.5% NDP and 8.9% Green.

EKOS pollster tweets about the PCs steadily eroding fortunes and the likelihood of their re-election – NOT.

<https://twitter.com/VoiceOfFranky/status/1383218916814516226/photo/1>

### ANGUS REID INSTITUTE

Angus Reid went into the field with a survey between April 20th and April 22nd following the latest restrictions and Premier Ford's tearful apology. In the cross-Canada survey they polled 444 Ontarians. Here are the highlights that relate to our province:

- 69% of the Ontario respondents said that the third wave of the novel coronavirus was preventable; 23% said it was inevitable and could not have been prevented
- 43% of the Ontario respondents believed that provincial government is primarily to blame for not preventing the third wave, 32% blame both levels of government equally while 23% primarily blame the feds
- 31% of the Ontario respondents said that Premier Ford is doing a good job of handling the pandemic, while 67 per cent say he is doing a poor job. This represents decline of 24% for Ford since November 2020
- 32% of Ontario respondents said the current restrictions go too far, 48% said they don't go far enough and 20% said they are about right

You can see the full report at the following link: <https://angusreid.org/ford-ontario-covid/>

## ONTARIO LEGISLATURE – CALENDAR

Between today and the end of 2021, the Legislature is scheduled to adjourn for the following periods:

- May 24 to 27
- June 4 to September 10
- October 11 to 14
- November 8 to 11

These are perfect opportunities to meet with you local MPPs to discuss the local issues that are of importance to your members and the provincial issues on COCA's priority list.

April 2021

## MLTSD'S UPDATED COVID-19 POSITION WHILE WORKING WITHIN 2-METERS: EYE PROTECTION REQUIRED

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Dear IHSA Stakeholder,

Recently the Ministry of Health (Ontario) provided new information on the risk of COVID-19 transmission through the eyes. In response, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) has provided the following statement:

- Working within 2-metres (indoors and outdoors) now requires eye protection AND an appropriate mask AT ALL TIMES.
- Mask selection, either PPE or source control masking, must be selected based on the projects/workplace risk assessment.
- Eye protection would include goggles, safety glasses, prescription glasses with side shields that are tight fitting and should also be selected based on the risk assessment.

[Review IHSA's recommendation COVID-19 Eye Protection statement here for more details.](#)

[IHSA's COVID-19 Risk Assessment Supplement Guide](#)

[IHSA's Sector Specific COVID-19 Resources](#)

[IHSA On-Demand Webinar: Developing Your COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan \(overview with MLTSD\)](#)



## INAUGURAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY DAY



**You are invited to the Inaugural Occupational Health and Safety Day on May 4th from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM** in recognition of the importance of staying safe and promoting the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases.

This year will be the first time the Province of Ontario recognizes Occupational Safety and Health Day. Occupational Safety and Health Day takes place during North American Occupational Safety and Health Week and will provide an opportunity to promote workplace safety and health through the education of safety and health rights, responsibilities and prevention measures.

Workplace injuries occur every day and profoundly affect workers, their families and their communities. The purpose of the event builds on the Day of Mourning to draw more attention to how employers and all workers can create a safe and healthy work culture that can help reduce the number of work-related deaths and injuries.

## Inaugural Occupational Health and Safety Day

Tuesday, May 4 2021 | 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM | via Zoom



Jane McKenna  
Parliamentary Assistant to the  
Minister of Labour, Training and  
Skills Development



Rob Ellis  
President  
MySafeWork



Tracey Mooradian  
GSC Health and Safety Manager  
Eastern Construction Co. Ltd.



Darryl Cooper  
President and COO  
Cooper Equipment Rentals Ltd.



Jason Bubba  
COO  
NORCAT

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)