

## Inspection Blitz Coming to High-Risk Workplaces in Ontario

January 18, 2021

On January 16, 2021, Ministry of Labour inspectors, local bylaw and police officers began visiting certain workplaces in Toronto, Hamilton, Peel, York and Durham as an additional measure to protect workers in response to rising COVID-19 cases. The protections build on the "Stay Safe All Day" campaign (the Campaign) announced by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development last week. The Campaign focuses on increasing workplace inspections in high transmission areas and will provide employers with educational materials to promote safe behaviour before, during and after work.

The Ontario government announced the Campaign after declaring a second provincial state of emergency and issuing a stay at home order, effective January 14, 2021.

As part of the Campaign, the inspection blitz seeks to ensure workers and patrons are maintaining physical distance, wearing masks and abiding by health and safety measures. To any individual or corporation that is not complying with COVID-19 safety requirements, inspectors may issue tickets, temporarily close the premises and separate groups larger than five people.

The Campaign will target workplaces identified by data from local public health units that have a heightened risk of transmission. These include workplaces with reported COVID-19 outbreaks, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution centres, food processing, and publicly accessible workplaces deemed essential, such as grocery stores.

The inspectors visiting the workplaces may issue fines of \$750 for not following the rules, \$1,000 for individuals or employers who prevent others from following the rules with a maximum fine of \$100,000 for an individual and \$10 million for employers. Any failure to follow the rules may also result in prosecution and up to one year of jail time.

For more information on Ontario's second state of emergency, please see our recent article *Ontario's Second State of Emergency – Permitted Businesses*.

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