

## ***The Government Has an Action Plan – Do You? Upcoming Changes to Ontario’s Occupational Health and Safety Act***

This month, the Ontario government released a new action plan entitled *It’s Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*, which outlines upcoming changes to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* as it relates to sexual violence and harassment in the workplace.

In particular, the Action Plan outlines the following commitments from the Government of Ontario which will affect employers:

1. The introduction of legislation to strengthen the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to include a definition of sexual harassment. The legislation will set out explicit requirements for employers to investigate and address sexual harassment complaints and will include an obligation on employers to make every reasonable effort to protect workers from sexual harassment in the workplace.
2. The creation of a special enforcement team of inspectors to address complaints of sexual harassment (and other types of workplace harassment).
3. The creation of a new Code of Practice and other educational materials to help employers comply with the law.

Given that eight (8) other Canadian jurisdictions have specific legislation addressing violence in the workplace, we anticipate legislative amendments in these jurisdictions to also provide better protections against sexual violence and harassment in the workplace.

In light of the above anticipated changes, employers should take this opportunity to review current policies and practices regarding sexual violence and harassment in the workplace. Please contact e2r® if you have any questions or concerns regarding your current policies or if you do not have a current policy in place.