

Workplace inspections to rise

The Ontario government is taking additional measures to protect workers in response to rising COVID-19 cases. Beginning this Saturday and Sunday, approximately 50 ministry inspectors, as well as local bylaw and police officers, will be visiting big-box stores in Toronto, Hamilton, Peel, York and Durham. The blitz will focus on ensuring workers and patrons are wearing masks, maintaining physical distance, and following every health and safety measure. Workplace health and safety inspectors will have the authority to ticket supervisors, employees and patrons who do not comply with COVID-19 safety requirements, temporarily close a premise and disperse groups of more than five people.

Details of the new enforcement measures were provided today by Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

‘We know most businesses are operating responsibly and taking the necessary steps to protect their workers and customers, and I want to thank them for their efforts,’ said Minister McNaughton. ‘Where we find an employer who has been acting in bad faith, we won’t hesitate to take action by immediately slapping them with a ticket and a fine. There will be real consequences for those who break the rules.’

These efforts build on the ‘Stay Safe All Day’ campaign announced earlier this week, which will focus workplace inspections in areas of high transmission, including break rooms, and provide resource materials to employers and workers to promote safe behaviour before, during and after work.

The campaign targets workplaces with heightened risks that have been identified by using data from local public health units and information reported directly to the province. Inspectors will focus on workplaces in the following sectors:

- Workplaces with reported outbreaks
- Manufacturing
- Warehousing
- Distribution centres
- Food processing
- Publicly accessible workplaces deemed essential, such as grocery stores

Ministry inspectors will also continue their focused onsite inspections at long-term care homes and retirement homes using a new data-sharing initiative with the Ministry of Long-Term Care and the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority.