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WORKPLACE SAFETY STRATEGY PREVENTING INJURIES AND SAVING MONEY

McGuinty Government On The Side Of Working Families And Businesses

TORONTO — The McGuinty government’s workplace health and safety strategy is producing dramatic results by preventing the human cost of workplace injuries and avoiding costs for businesses, Labour Minister Steve Peters announced today.

“Fewer Ontarians are being injured at work, and businesses are avoiding huge costs,” said Peters. “Our plan is working — we are well on track to reduce the lost-time injury rate by 20 per cent by 2008.”

As a result of the strategy, there have been 14,649 fewer lost-time injuries to Ontario workers over the past two years than there otherwise would have been. This has resulted in Ontario businesses avoiding over \$960 million in costs associated with workplace injuries. A lost-time injury occurs when a worker loses wages as a result of a temporary or permanent work injury.

Peters made the announcement today at the annual Industrial Accident Prevention Association Conference and Trade Show.

The strategy involves initiatives by the government and its health and safety partners, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), Health and Safety Associations, and Ontario employers and workers.

The government and its partners have taken bold steps to meet their goal to reduce workplace injuries by 20 per cent by 2008, including:

- Hiring 200 new health and safety inspectors. Of these, 131 are already working across Ontario. All 200 will be carrying out inspections of high-risk workplaces early next year.
- Focusing ministry inspections on firms with the highest injury rate and highest WSIB costs – up to 6,000 annually – and inspecting them up to four times a year.
- Giving more than 5,000 other workplaces per year a “last chance” to voluntarily improve their health and safety records with the help of the WSIB and 12 health and safety associations.
- Launching the Pains and Strains Campaign to help reduce ergonomic-related injuries, which account for 42 per cent of all lost-time injuries in Ontario.

The Ontario government and specifically the Ministry of Labour have been recognized internationally for this unique and successful strategy to reduce injuries and costs. In recognition, Ontario will host the 2007 International Labour Organization conference on labour inspections in Toronto.

“The workplace health and safety strategy is saving thousands of workers the pain and suffering of serious workplace injuries,” said Peters. “And with fewer workplace injuries, employers are benefiting from avoiding costs associated with lost production, retraining costs and equipment damage.”

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