

COMMUNITY COUNSELLORS TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS INFORMATION IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

The Ontario government is reaching out to newcomers and diverse communities through various community and cultural organizations to provide information about employment standards in Ontario.

A Commitment to Diversity

Ontario's diversity is a tremendous source of strength and enables Ontario to do business with the world. In Ontario, people come from some 200 countries and speak more than 130 languages. Ontario's diversity helps advance a strong and prosperous province that provides our people with a high quality of life. Ontario must capitalize on diversity.

A Commitment to Outreach

Protecting rights in the workplace and offering resources to help workers and employers achieve compliance with employment standards is vital to ensuring strong workers in a strong economy.

SISO (Settlement and Integration Services Organization) of Hamilton is a community-based, client-centred organization providing a wide range of essential services and programs to facilitate and support early settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in the City of Hamilton.

SISO and the Ministry of Labour agreed in March 2006 on a partnership arrangement that would enable SISO to get better information to all its clients, workers and employers, on their employment standards rights. SISO counsellors have some 40 languages to call on and the ministry recognized that they would be able to assist their clients with employment standards information in their own languages and with cultural sensitivity.

Under the two-year partnership arrangement, the Ministry will continue to provide support to these counsellors with updates on employment standards, and further training as needed.

Other Initiatives

- The Ministry of Labour is working with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) to develop a self-learning package for professionals serving immigrants on how to help their clients know and assert their employment standards rights

- The government is also undertaking further strategic awareness/outreach measures focussed on both employers and groups serving vulnerable workers, including:
 - monthly presentations at Ministry of Economic Development and Trade seminars: “Doing Business in Ontario” for new immigrant entrepreneurs
 - working with the Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association to provide employment standards information to its members
 - working with the Centre for Information and Community Services (CICS) in Toronto to provide training and support similar to that provided for SISO.
- In addition, in October 2005, the Minister of Labour announced increased proactive employment standards inspections to protect vulnerable employees. A Dedicated Inspection Team of Employment Standards Officers carries out 2,500 proactive workplace inspections each year to ensure workplaces are in compliance with the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

Employment Standards Act Resources

- Four easy-to-understand brochures about workplace rights in 23 languages available on the Ministry of Labour website www.labour.gov.on.ca and from ServiceOntario Centres
- A revised and simplified employment standards poster, which must be displayed in all workplaces. It is free and easily downloaded from the Ministry of Labour website www.labour.gov.on.ca. It is also available in 23 languages
- The Workplace Gateway (www.serviceontario.ca/workplacegateway) - a one-stop Internet site where both employers and workers can access information.

In 2004 and 2005 the ministry reached out to over 100 organizations to seek their assistance in providing information on employment standards to their clients or members. These are primarily groups in the Greater Toronto Area serving newcomers and members of diverse communities, as well as selected employer groups.

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