Human Resources Legislative Update

Expert Panel Tables Recommendations To Improve Health and Safety

Date: December 16, 2010

On December 16, 2010, the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety tabled its Report and Recommendations to the Minister of Labour ("Report") on ways to improve workplace health and safety in Ontario. As recommended by the Report, the government announced the creation of a Chief Prevention Officer position, which will be tasked with ensuring effective health and safety services and enforcement at workplaces throughout Ontario.

The panel, chaired by Tony Dean, professor in the School of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Toronto, made a number of additional recommendations, including the following:

- tracking the performance of workplaces and sectors through enhanced information gathering and sharing methods;
- providing recognition and incentives for high-performing employers;
- increasing stakeholder involvement in the development of regulations;
- providing training to improve foundational knowledge on the rights and responsibilities of workers and supervisors;
- enhanced training and the establishment of minimum standards for high-risk activities such as working at heights in the construction industry;
- increasing penalties where standards for training, supervision and the provision and use of safety equipment are not met;
- targeted outreach to non-English speaking workers;
- increased collaboration and integration between agencies delivering health and safety services; and
- enhancement of enforcement tools for health and safety inspectors.

The government will determine how best to implement the panel's remaining recommendations.