Human Resources Legislative Update

Federal Government Introduces *Helping Families in Need Act*

Date: September 20, 2012

On September 20, 2012, the federal government introduced Bill C-44, the *Helping Families in Need Act*, legislation that would, if passed, amend (among other things) both the *Employment Insurance Act* ("EI Act") and the *Canada Labour Code* as follows:

- the EI Act will provide for a new specified sickness benefit for parents receiving EI parental benefits who fall ill while on parental leave. The claimant will not be disentitled for failing to prove that he or she would have been available for work were it not for that illness;
- parents of a critically ill or injured child (under 18 years of age) will be eligible for a new EI benefit which, subject to certain conditions, will provide income support for up to 35 weeks (to become available in June 2013);
- Part III of the *Canada Labour Code* will be amended to provide for a specified period of unpaid leave and job protection for parents whose child dies or disappears as a result of a suspected *Criminal Code* offence (to become effective January 2013) or who needs to care for a critically ill child (to become effective June 2013).

If passed, and once the Bill takes effect, the federal government will also make available a new grant to provide for federal income support for up to 35 weeks for parents of murdered or missing children (under 18 years of age), beginning on January 1, 2013.