Human Resources Legislative Update

Ontario Unveils Framework for Reopening the Province

Date: April 27, 2020

On April 27, 2020, the Ontario government announced its framework for reopening Ontario (Framework), which sets out the criteria the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) and health experts will use to advise the government on the timing of and direction for lifting emergency measures, as well as the principles for reopening businesses, services, and public spaces.

The Framework includes the government's three stages for reopening businesses and public spaces within the province. Each stage is intended to last for a period of approximately 2 – 4 weeks in order to monitor any impacts or resurgence of cases. After each period, the CMOH may advise whether the province should reapply or tighten certain measures, maintain the status quo, or progress to the next stage in the framework.

The stages are set out as follows:

1. opening select workplaces that were ordered to close or to restrict operations, opening some outdoor spaces, allowing some small gatherings, and permitting hospitals to begin offering some non-urgent and scheduled surgeries,
2. opening more workplaces (such as service industries and retail workplaces) and outdoor spaces and allowing some larger public gatherings, and
3. opening all workplaces responsibly and further relaxing restrictions on gatherings while continuing protections for vulnerable populations.

As public health measures are lifted, the government states the public will need to continue maintaining physical distancing along with self-isolation for those experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. The Framework also recommends continuing remote work arrangements where feasible.

Note that the Framework does not contain any formal commitments or timelines for relaxing emergency measures; it instead provides an overview of the next steps for doing so. Accordingly, the actions and direction the government takes at each stage to reopen the province may adapt and change.