



# News Release

For Immediate Release

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## Province Could Do More with Repeat Violators to Improve Unsafe Working Conditions: Auditor General

(TORONTO) Many companies that were inspected multiple times over the past six years were repeatedly cited for similar occupational health or safety hazards to workers, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her *2019 Annual Report*, released today.

“Enforcement efforts by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development are not changing the unsafe practices of many employers,” Lysyk said after her Report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

“Improving the province’s enforcement efforts and inspections could further reduce work-place related illness, injury and death.”

On a positive note, the Report found that since 2009, Ontario’s injury rate causing lost time at work has been the lowest of all Canadian provinces. The province also has had the second lowest worker fatality rate in Canada on average from 2013 to 2017.

But the Report cautioned that the province should not become complacent. It found that the number of injuries in the industrial sector rose 21% in the five years up to 2017 and was up 29% in the health-care sector in the same period. As well, as of July 2019, only 23 inspections of more than 550 mining operations had been completed.

In 2018, 85 people in Ontario died at work and an additional 62,000 were absent from work because of a job-related injury. In addition, 143 people died from an occupational disease.

The Ministry’s Occupational Health and Safety Program cost about \$200 million in 2018/19 for prevention and enforcement activities. Almost half of this funding went to six health-and-safety associations to consult with and train businesses and workers on how to maintain a safe workplace. However, the Report found that the Ministry does not know how effective the associations have been at helping to prevent occupational injuries and disease.

Among the findings in the Report:

- The Ministry does not maintain an inventory of all businesses that are subject to inspection under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. The Report estimated that the Ministry’s system contains only 28% of all businesses in Ontario. The Ministry proactively inspects only about 1% of Ontario businesses each year, and investigates an additional 1% of businesses after incidents have occurred.
- When a company is found to have unsafe workplace practices, the Ministry does not know what other businesses the owner might be linked to because it does not consistently record ownership details.

- Although under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* the employer bears the most responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of its workers, almost all fines were issued to individuals such as workers and supervisors, rather than employers.

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Read the report at [www.auditor.on.ca](http://www.auditor.on.ca)

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