



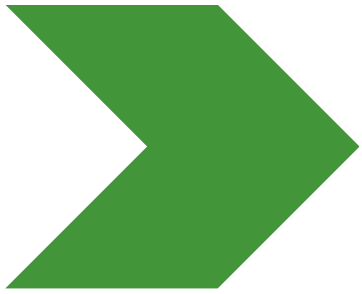
# Healthy and Safe Ontario Workplaces

A Strategy for Transforming Occupational Health and Safety | DEC 2013

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# Message from the Minister of Labour



**Through the development and implementation of this strategy, we are investing in our workforce and our businesses to ensure we live and work in a safer and more productive Ontario.**



I am pleased to present *Healthy and Safe Ontario Workplaces – A Strategy for Transforming Occupational Health and Safety*. The first of its kind in our province!

Through the release of this strategy, we are taking action to transform Ontario's occupational health and safety system and eliminate preventable workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities.

The development of this strategy was a key recommendation of the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety. It provides a framework through which the remaining panel recommendations can be achieved and will guide and align our future efforts to make sure Ontario continues to be one of the safest jurisdictions.

We all must work together to create the lasting change it envisions. The Ministry will use this framework to guide its efforts going forward, and will work with business, employee groups, and our health and safety partners to create a culture where health and safety is at the centre of the workplace.

I want to thank the Chief Prevention Officer, the business groups, labour, community and the countless voices from across Ontario who participated in the development of this plan, and who shared their knowledge and expertise in this collaborative and meaningful effort.

Through the development and implementation of this strategy, we are investing in our workforce and our businesses to ensure we live and work in a safer and more productive Ontario.

This is a prevention framework for everyone to embrace, and I look forward to moving ahead, together, to ensure we continue to transform Ontario's health and safety system.

Sincerely,  
**Yasir Naqvi**  
Minister of Labour



# Message from the Chief Prevention Officer



**This inaugural province-wide strategy is our blueprint for realizing the vision of healthy and safe Ontario workplaces over the next five years.**



Since becoming Chief Prevention Officer, I have spent many hours listening to, and learning from, parents, workers, employers, health and safety practitioners, and industry and government leaders. I have heard about their beliefs, experiences and expectations for workplace health and safety in Ontario. The common message that comes out loud and clear is that workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses are unnecessary, unacceptable and preventable.

This inaugural province-wide strategy is our blueprint for realizing the vision of healthy and safe Ontario workplaces over the next five years. To realize that vision, the strategy establishes two goals for Ontario's occupational health and safety system.

It targets the areas of greatest need and enhances service delivery. It also sets strategic priorities to guide system partners, the workplace parties (employers, supervisors and workers) and all other relevant occupational health and safety organizations as they work together to achieve the goals.

The strategy builds on the recommendations of the 2010 report of the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety. We have been moving forward with implementing the panel's 46 recommendations, including structural changes, mandatory safety training and improvements targeted at specific occupational health and safety issues. These recommendations provide a strong foundation for the implementation of the strategy.

Most importantly, the strategy recognizes that, to prevent workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses, all the players in the system need to urgently move forward with an unprecedented degree of determination. The strategy will be the basis for the system partners to work in an integrated and collaborative fashion. It will guide the planning, coordination and delivery of integrated activities, programs and services over the next five years to achieve common goals. In an environment where the workforce and workplaces will continue to change, this strategy will guide us in addressing the areas of greatest need in a flexible and adaptable manner.

This first-of-its-kind province-wide strategy is an important step forward in transforming the diverse occupational health and safety institutions into a



## Message from the Chief Prevention Officer (Cont'd)

cohesive, integrated system focused on clearly articulated goals and priorities, and driven by evidence of impact where possible. It is essential to emphasize that this is not just the Ministry of Labour's strategy. It is a strategy for all organizations involved in occupational health and safety, including those providing enforcement, training, awareness, advisory, insurance, clinical, outreach and research services. Leadership at all levels will be fundamental to achieving this vision. We are all in this together.

The development of a provincial strategy is a significant accomplishment for the ministry and the system. It reflects ongoing advice from the Prevention Council, as well as extensive consultation with our partners, worker and employer representatives, individual members of the public and community organizations.

This strategy fulfils my obligation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Section 22.3(3) to develop a provincial occupational health and safety strategy. However, our intent is not only to meet the legislative requirement, it is to bring together the expertise, knowledge and passion of the system to prevent workplace illnesses and injuries in Ontario. We will be reviewing our progress and strategic priorities in forthcoming annual reports on the system, as recommended in the panel's report and reflected in legislation.

I want to thank everyone for their contributions to this strategy and ask for their continued engagement in implementing initiatives to achieve the vision of healthy and safe Ontario workplaces.

Sincerely,  
**George Gritziotis**  
Chief Prevention Officer,  
Ontario Ministry of Labour



**Leadership at all levels will be fundamental to achieving this vision. We are all in this together.**



# Introduction

**Our vision:** All Ontario workplaces are healthy and safe. We want to ensure that all\* workplaces in Ontario provide a secure environment from which workers return home healthy, safe and sound, every day. Workplace health and safety affects the wellbeing, success and prosperity of individuals, families, businesses, communities and our province.

The purpose of this strategy is to guide the occupational health and safety system partners – including the Ministry of Labour, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and Ontario’s six Health and Safety Associations – and describe how we can achieve our vision. The strategy also aims to guide workplaces across the province, the broader community of health and safety practitioners, and organizations with interests in occupational health and safety. *Healthy and Safe Ontario Workplaces* sets out a roadmap that organizations can use to align their policies,

programs and initiatives with our collective strategic priorities.

The ministry has gone to great lengths to develop a strategy that will have a significant positive impact on occupational health and safety across Ontario, including consulting extensively with the public and our stakeholders about what matters most to them. Hundreds of voices participated in this process. We heard from more than 1,250 consultation participants and received 220 responses to the consultation paper released on March 18, 2013. The strategy was guided by input from the 11-member Prevention Council. The council provided thoughtful advice to help create a strategy that represents Ontario’s health and safety needs. The input from all our stakeholders is reflected throughout the strategy, providing insight on our vision, how we can achieve the vision and why it is important for us to act now.

## An 11-member Prevention Council advises the Chief Prevention Officer

### Labour representatives:

- Patrick Dillon, Provincial Building and Construction Trades of Ontario
- Colin Grieve, Hamilton and Ontario Professional Firefighters
- Nancy Hutchison, Ontario Federation of Labour
- Bryan Neath, Ontario Food and Commercial Workers Canada

### Occupational health and safety representative:

- Graeme Norval, University of Toronto

### Employer representatives:

- Michael Oxley, DuPont Canada
- Roy Slack, Cementation Canada
- Dawn Tattle, Anchor Sharing & Caissons Ltd.

### Non-union worker representative:

- Linda Vannucci, Toronto Workers' Health and Safety Clinic

### WSIB representative:

- Suzanna Zagar, WSIB

*One employer representative position was recently vacated. The process for filling the position is under way.*

\* "All workplaces" refers to those under provincial jurisdiction; this does not include: work done by the owner or occupant or a servant in a private residence or on the connected land; or workplaces under federal jurisdiction.





# The Case for Action

Ontario has a strong occupational health and safety record and has made significant progress in improving workplace safety.<sup>‡</sup> However, we can and must do better.

At the most fundamental level, society has a moral obligation to ensure proper conditions in workplaces to allow workers to return home unharmed. We also have a responsibility to help ensure all workers in the province are able to experience the benefits of a healthy and safe work environment, which extend into all aspects of their lives. Benefits of a healthy and safe work environment include the sense of wellbeing that comes from being physically and mentally healthy as well as the feeling of personal accomplishment that comes from a job well done.

As individuals we have a responsibility to ensure that those closest to Ontario workers have peace of mind in knowing

their loved ones are properly protected each day. Even one death is too many. In 2012, there were 242 work-related fatalities in Ontario<sup>1</sup>, each of which was preventable. We must act to ensure families and friends avoid the emotional pain that comes from losing the ones they love.

Work-related fatalities don't just cost us in terms of lives and personal loss. It is challenging to quantify the economic costs of workplace illnesses, injuries and fatalities but we know the benefit payments by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) to compensate

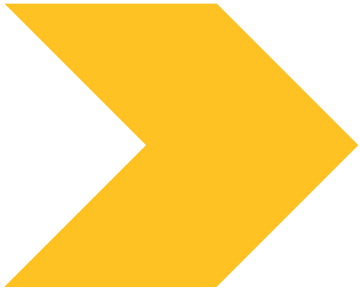
workers and their families was \$2.67 billion in 2012<sup>2</sup> for work-related injuries and illnesses in Ontario. This figure does not include costs that are more difficult to quantify such as reduced production, lower productivity and property damage.



## Leadership Spotlight

*Rob Ellis, Shirley Hickman and Paul Kells have all founded organizations that raise community awareness of occupational health and safety. All three were inspired to act after their families suffered the tragic loss of a young worker to a preventable workplace fatality. Programs such as Safe Communities Canada (now part of Parachute Canada), MySafeWork and Threads of Life are all working to improve awareness and create sustainable change in society.*

<sup>‡</sup> The frequency of injuries in Ontario has been declining since 2001. Ontario had the lowest injury frequency amongst Canadian jurisdictions from 2009 to 2011 (the most recent year for which information is available). <sup>11</sup>



# The Case for Action (Cont'd)

The Institute for Work and Health has estimated the total economic cost of occupational injuries in Canada was \$17 billion in 2008<sup>3</sup>.

At the workplace level, there is a legal obligation to meet the health and safety requirements set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations. Employers face consequences if they do not meet these requirements or if they are responsible for an injury, illness or fatality.

Consequences can include fines, re-training workers, higher insurance premiums, fixing damaged equipment or even criminal charges<sup>4,5</sup>. The cost of these consequences can decrease profitability and affect an organization's long-term sustainability. On the other hand, strong occupational health and safety performance can enhance a workplace's financial sustainability and its public image.

Taking all these factors into account, all of us have a strong incentive to act to achieve our vision of healthy and safe workplaces for all Ontarians.

We want a province that has:

- healthy and safe workers
- open access to information and supports
- comprehensive services for workplace parties
- thorough measurement of the system's performance
- clear results achieved through integrated service delivery

## Spotlight

*For more than a decade, Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) has been supporting the health and safety needs of migrant farm workers. OHCOW's work responds to the growing need for health and safety resources for temporary foreign workers in Ontario. Though originally focused on improving work conditions and preventing occupational illness, since 2006, OHCOW has also been providing occupational health clinical services to migrant farm workers in South Western Ontario and partnering with community agencies. Most recently (since 2009) OHCOW's Migrant Worker Project has expanded to include prevention interventions, education and awareness-raising efforts.*





# 3

## The Foundation: Occupational Health and Safety in Ontario Workplaces

All workplace parties have a role to play in preventing workplace-related illnesses, injuries and fatalities in their workplaces. To ensure a healthy and safe environment, each workplace must have a well-functioning Internal Responsibility System (IRS)\*\*, appropriate policies and programs, and other protective measures.

However, workplace commitment to implementing occupational health and

safety policies, practices and programs varies. Some workplaces take the “watch me” approach. They exhibit excellent occupational health and safety practices and often serve as occupational health and safety champions for other workplaces. Some workplaces take the “show me” approach. These workplaces are unaware of their occupational health and safety responsibilities, but are willing to learn and comply.

Some workplaces take a “make me” approach. They are willfully non-compliant and must be made to meet the requirements of the law. One factor that influences a workplace’s approach to occupational health and safety is its awareness of occupational health and safety rights and responsibilities, and the consequences of not meeting legal requirements.

### Did You Know?

*Workplaces with more than five workers are required by law to have a Health and Safety Representative. Workplaces with 20 or more workers, or where a Designated Substance Regulation applies, are required to have a Joint Health and Safety Committee. These formal mechanisms help ensure that all workplace parties can actively contribute to an effective IRS.*

\*\* IRS means that everyone in the workplace has a role to play in keeping workplaces safe and healthy. Workers in the workplace who see a health and safety problem such as a hazard or contravention of the Ontario Health and Safety Act have a duty to report the situation to the employer or a supervisor. Employers and supervisors are, in turn, required to acquaint workers with any hazard in the work they do.

**All workplace parties have a role to play in preventing workplace related illnesses, injuries and fatalities in their workplaces.**



## The Foundation: Occupational Health and Safety in Ontario Workplaces (Cont'd)

### Awareness Materials to Support Occupational Health and Safety in Every Workplace

Awareness of occupational health and safety rights and responsibilities is a fundamental first step in ensuring workplaces are healthy and safe. The Expert Advisory Panel highlighted the importance of awareness in recommendations that have been implemented by the Ministry of Labour.

- Since October 1, 2012, employers must display a new workplace “Health & Safety at Work: Prevention Starts Here” poster. The poster summarizes workers’ health and safety rights and responsibilities, and the responsibilities of employers and supervisors.
- On November 15, 2013, the ministry announced new mandatory occupational health and safety awareness training for supervisors and workers. This training comes into effect July 1, 2014 and is supported by free on-line e-learning tutorials and hard copy workbooks.



Ontario’s occupational health and safety system works to influence the level of commitment (or occupational health and safety foundation) within each workplace by providing the appropriate services. These services can include enforcing the law, where required, and/or providing support, such as training and awareness, for those who need it.



# Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety System

The Ontario government has a long-standing tradition of protecting worker health and safety. The Ministry of Labour's mandate, together with the system partners (see diagram), is to serve all workers and employers under provincial jurisdiction across Ontario.

Each system partner has specific roles and responsibilities:

- Ministry of Labour: legislation, enforcement and prevention
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB): workers' compensation and return to work supports (funding of the system through a portion of employer premiums)
- six Health and Safety Associations (HSAs): training, consulting and clinical services for workers and employers

## The province's six health and safety associations include:

### Four sector-focused safe workplace associations:

- Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA)
- Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA)
- Workplace Safety North (WSN)
- Workplace Safety and Prevention Services (WSPS)

### A medical clinic:

- Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)

### A training centre:

- Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC)

In addition, many other groups and organizations contribute to, or increase, our capacity to deliver prevention services such as:

- workers
- employers
- labour organizations, unions and training centres
- business and industry associations
- research organizations
- non-governmental organizations

- other ministries and levels of government
- private occupational health and safety service providers
- community colleges

These groups all play an important role in supporting the system by sharing information and best practices, and by providing programs and services to workers and workplaces.



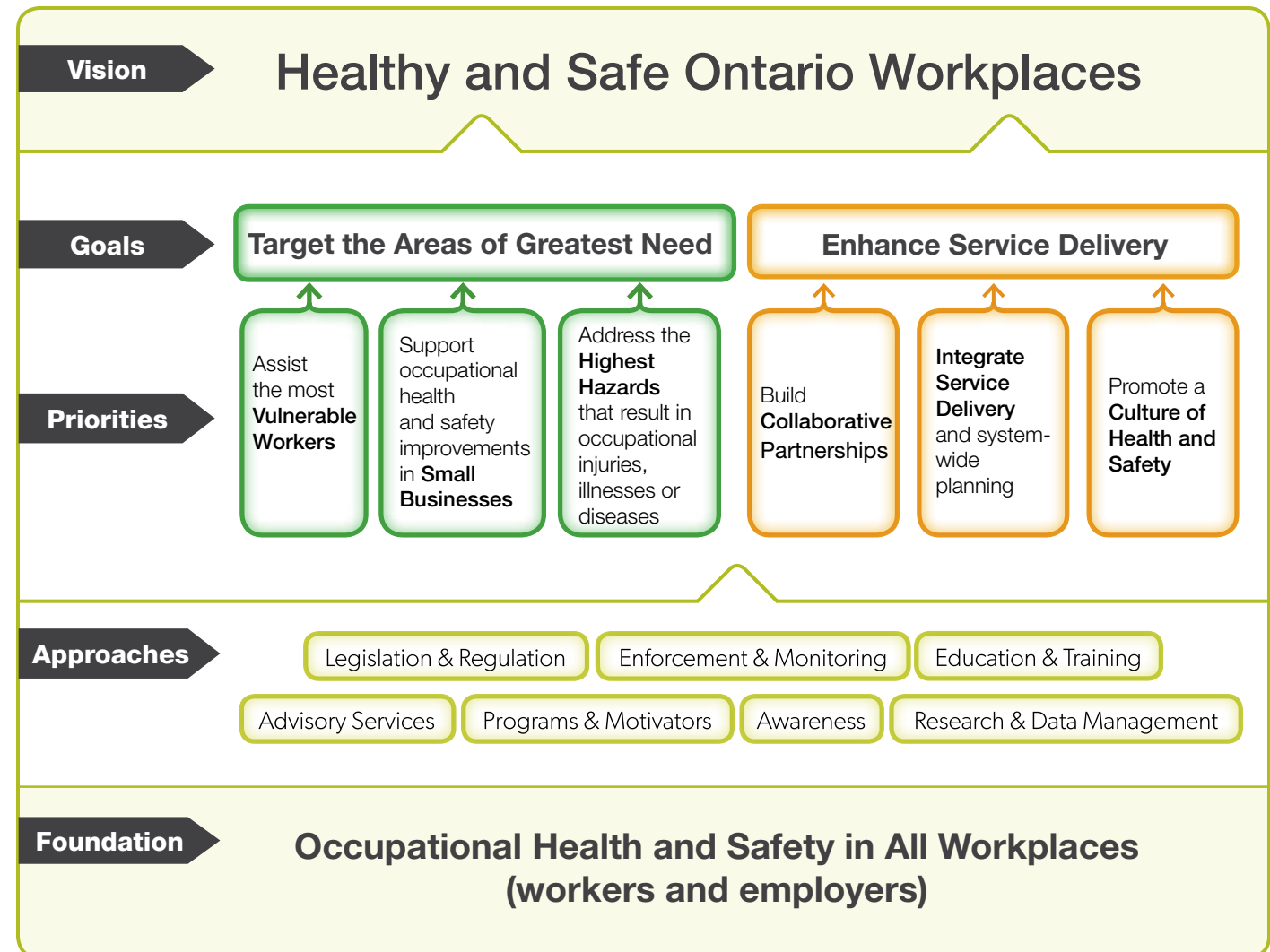
# Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety System

(Cont'd)



# Strategy Framework

The strategy framework is designed to guide all parties who influence health and safety in Ontario workplaces and help us maximize the investments made by all parts of the system.



## Strategy Framework (Cont'd)

The priorities are broad enough that all organizations can “fit” or align their occupational health and safety activities into the framework. To achieve our vision of healthy and safe Ontario workplaces, the system will use the most appropriate approach(es) in priority areas to achieve two goals:

- **Target the Areas of Greatest Need** – identify opportunities to reduce the occupational health and safety risks that workers face, which can be influenced by individual, employer and/or job task characteristics
- **Enhance Service Delivery** – improve the way we use available approaches to have the greatest impact

This framework is supported by four **Principles** to guide actions to improve occupational health and safety:

- **Shared leadership and responsibility.** All system partners and workplace parties share leadership and responsibility for healthy and safe workplaces. The ministry provides leadership in enforcing the legislation. The Chief Prevention Officer – with input from the Prevention Council - provides leadership in co-ordinating system partners and providing guidance to workplaces across the province. Leadership responsibilities extend beyond the ministry and the system partners to business and labour leaders and workplace parties. To achieve results, more organizational leaders must make occupational health and safety a high priority in their workplaces.
- **Stakeholder engagement.** All Ontarians have an interest in occupational health and safety. By listening to all voices, we can learn how to improve the system and improve the impact of our services and initiatives. We will engage those within the system, as well as those beyond the system, to ensure we are aware of different perspectives and are able to meet diverse needs.
- **Best available evidence.** All decisions should be supported by the best evidence available. To identify situations that put workers at risk, the system must improve its ability to collect and use data to guide system activities and drive continuous quality improvement. We must use that data to target our efforts and measure our success.
- **Transparency and accountability.** We are all working to achieve the same outcomes, even though we may use different approaches. It is important to be transparent so we can learn from each other, improve together and hold one another accountable.





# Approaches for Improving Occupational Health and Safety

The approaches in the strategy framework are the tools available to help the system achieve our vision, goals and priorities. These approaches are not new. However, the strategy envisions a different and more effective way of using these tools. This involves two key changes:

1. All system partners must align their work to help achieve common goals. Organizations that have unique expertise will be able to capitalize on each other's strengths, learn from one another and have greater impact.
2. The system partners will need to be more thoughtful about how they use available tools. Different tools are appropriate in different settings and for different goals. For example, training may be the best way to ensure compliance

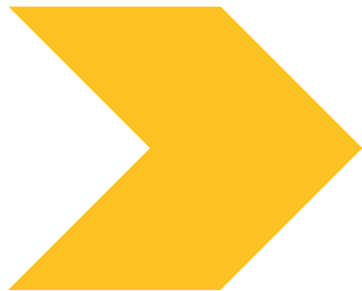
in some workplaces, while enforcement may be the best approach in others.

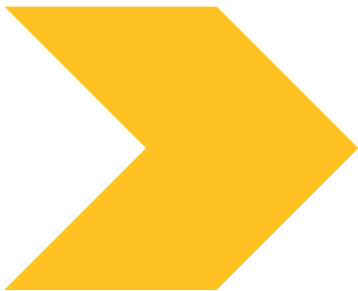
Our approaches and tools include:

- **Legislation and Regulations:** The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations establish the legal requirements for occupational health and safety in workplaces under provincial jurisdiction. These requirements provide the clearest and strongest direction to workplace parties on occupational health and safety practices and procedures. However, stakeholders say the regulations need to be clearer, more consistent, workplace relevant and easier for all to understand.



- **Enforcement and Monitoring:** These are guided by a strategy called Safe at Work Ontario (SAWO). To monitor and enforce compliance with the law, ministry inspectors visit thousands of Ontario workplaces every year. While only the ministry has the authority to enforce the law, many other workplace parties or their safety partners are involved in monitoring safety programs and practices. Stakeholders agree that strong enforcement is essential in dealing with workplaces that are willfully non-compliant with the law.





## Approaches for Improving Occupational Health and Safety (Cont'd)

They are encouraging the Ministry of Labour to collaborate more closely with other ministries and levels of government to help identify and target willfully non-compliant workplaces with the highest risks.

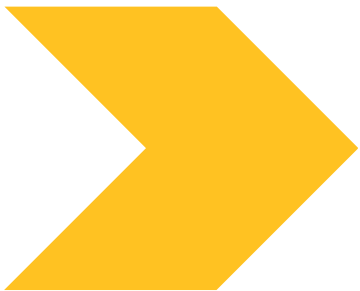
- **Education and Training:** These are essential to preparing workplace parties to adopt occupational health and safety practices and to respond to many occupational health and safety issues and hazards. Many different organizations provide education and training, including the six provincially designated Health and Safety Associations. The province is actively implementing the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety (2010) to clarify and standardize training requirements. We need rigorous standards to ensure training programs effectively

prepare workers to be healthy and safe on the job.

- **Advisory Services:** These are available to help workplace parties comply with legal requirements and go beyond compliance to achieve occupational health and safety excellence. The same organizations that deliver education and training services often provide advisory services. There is significant occupational health and safety expertise throughout the province, but stakeholders have said we need to develop better partnerships and referral mechanisms to ensure workplace parties are directed to the most appropriate, accessible advisory services to meet their needs.
- **Programs and Motivators:** These can be used to move workplaces beyond compliance by encouraging

excellence in occupational health and safety. The motivators can be financial or non-financial. They can be rewards or penalties. Ontario and other jurisdictions currently use a wide variety of programs to motivate better occupational health and safety performance. The ministry is exploring options to build on and improve existing programs. Stakeholders say they support motivators when there is evidence they achieve results. They also support programs to recognize leaders who promote occupational health and safety best practices in workplaces.

- **Awareness:** This is the first step in building positive occupational health and safety practices. Without awareness, workers, supervisors and employers are not able to act effectively to ensure workers are healthy



# Approaches for Improving Occupational Health and Safety (Cont'd)

and safe. We have to make more people aware of their occupational health and safety rights and responsibilities – especially those most at risk and their employers. To raise awareness, we need to work with new partners, develop more consistent messages and use them across the system.

- **Research and Data Management:** These allow exploration of new, innovative and practical ways to improve occupational health and safety practices and outcomes. Ontario’s strong occupational health and safety research community has helped the system partners understand both the causes of workplace injuries and illnesses and the ways to improve health and safety in the workplace. Research is critically important to understand the changing nature of workplace hazards,

## Occupational Health and Safety Research in Ontario

Ontario has a very strong occupational health and safety research community that contributes to making workplaces healthy and safe. The key occupational health and safety research partners are the:

- Institute for Work and Health
- Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease
- Centre for Research Expertise for Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders
- Occupational Cancer Research Centre

The Ministry of Labour’s Research Opportunities Program also provides strategic research investments for occupational health and safety research and knowledge exchange projects focused on system priorities. The ministry has established a new Occupational Health and Safety Research Advisory Panel to advise the Chief Prevention Officer on research and research funding issues.

such as those that contribute to occupational diseases. Research and data analysis can also help identify workplaces with the greatest risk, target assistance and enforcement efforts more effectively, and evaluate the impact of actions.

To improve the system, discussions will focus on how to resource each of the tools in the occupational health and safety toolbox and how to use them more effectively as part of integrated, collaborative service delivery.



# Goal 1: Target the Areas of Greatest Need

The first goal of the strategy is to target areas of greatest need. We know where to focus efforts based on the panel’s report, research and conversations with stakeholders. To create healthy and safe workplaces, we must find new ways to reach those at greatest risk. This means focusing on vulnerable workers, small businesses and high hazards.



## 7.1 ➤ Assist the Most Vulnerable Workers

Some workers are more vulnerable than others to injuries, illnesses and fatalities. In Ontario’s rapidly changing work environment, it is difficult to define “vulnerability” with precision. A worker’s vulnerability depends on many individual and workplace factors that interact in complicated ways to increase risk of occupational injuries, illnesses or fatalities. Although individual factors are often the focus when defining vulnerability, workplace factors like hours of

work, employment stability and hazards in the workplace are also important.

As part of this strategy, we will conduct research and seek evidence-based advice to help develop a comprehensive definition of vulnerability and create a vulnerability risk framework. However, based on existing research and information from stakeholders, we know some factors that influence vulnerability. The following figure

highlights some of those factors and helps start to paint a picture of those most at risk.

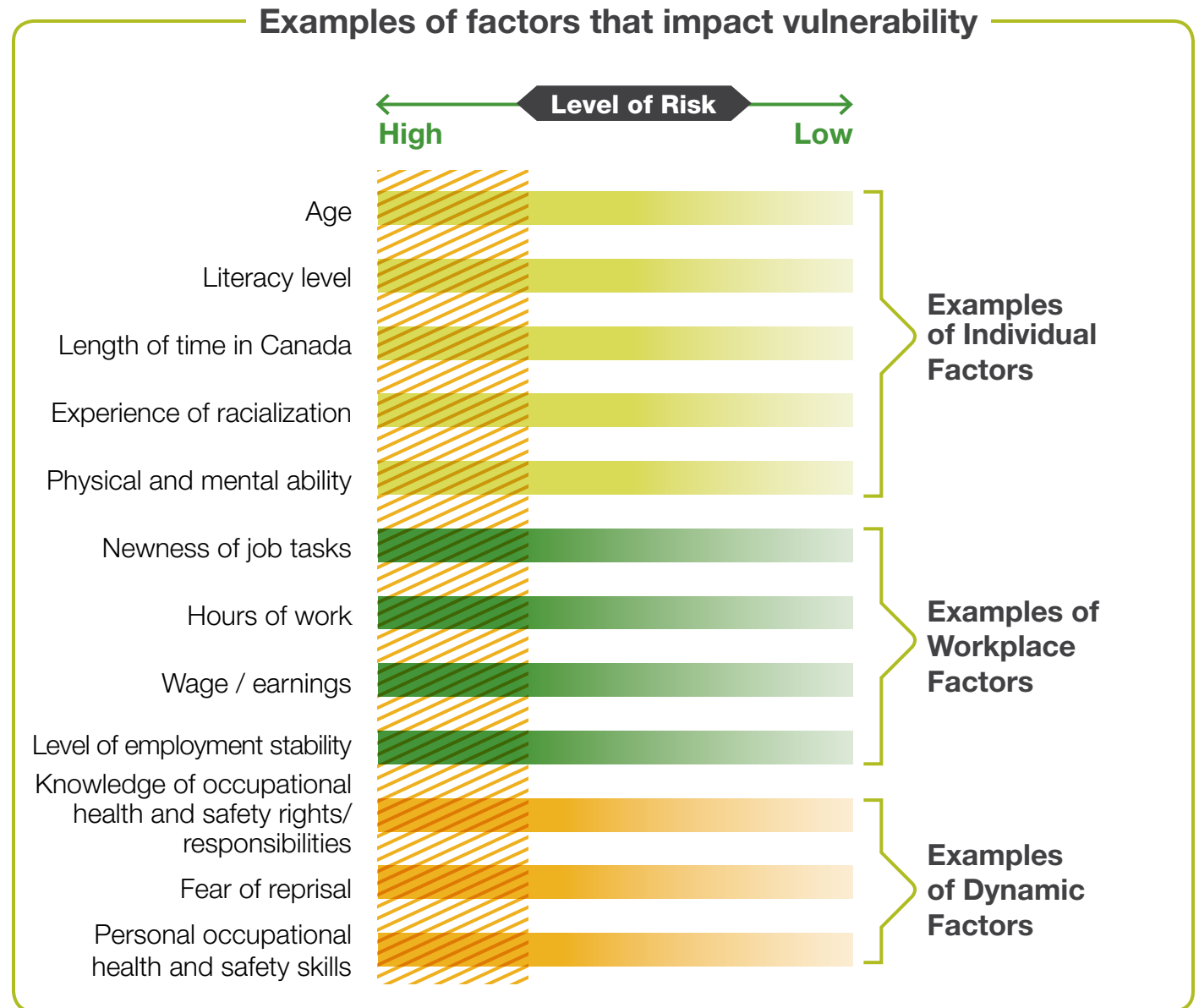
**A worker's vulnerability depends on many individual and workplace factors that interact in complicated ways.**



# 7.1



## Assist the Most Vulnerable Workers (Cont'd)



# 7.1



## Assist the Most Vulnerable Workers (Cont'd)

All workers at some point in their working life will experience personal or workplace factors that increase their vulnerability. However, some workers are at greater risk because they are coping with multiple factors that simultaneously affect their vulnerability (see shaded box). For example, a recent immigrant new to a job in Ontario, with limited English or French language skills, and little knowledge of occupational health and safety, would be at greater risk. The goal is to seek evidence-based data to identify the groups of workers who are at the greatest risk and most in need.

Stakeholders identified some examples of vulnerable groups, such as undocumented workers and those operating in the underground economy. Age can also increase risk. We have heard that because of more frequent late-career job changes, many older workers may be inexperienced in their current job and, therefore, be at greater risk.

### Activities to Help Vulnerable Workers

- The Ministry of Labour has established a Vulnerable Worker Task Group to provide a better understanding of the occupational health and safety system needs of vulnerable workers and their issues. As part of its 30-month mandate, the task group will identify new ways for the ministry to engage with vulnerable worker stakeholders, moving beyond traditionally consulted organizations, industry and communities, and resulting in more responsive ministry and system partner activities and initiatives.
- In an effort to find workplaces operating in the underground economy where there may be large concentrations of vulnerable workers, the ministry has piloted extended hours for inspections.
- The Ministry of Labour is working in partnership with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to increase newcomers' access to occupational health and safety information and practices. The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's web portal now includes health and safety information and receives more than a million visits per year.
- The annual Ministry of Labour "It's Your Job" student video contest gives high school students an opportunity to share their knowledge with other students by producing a two-minute video demonstrating the importance of health and safety at work.



# 7.1



## Assist the Most Vulnerable Workers (Cont'd)

At the other end of the age spectrum, young workers are four times more likely than other groups to be injured on the job<sup>6</sup>.

Some factors that contribute to vulnerability also make it more difficult to reach workers at risk and meet their unique needs. For example, male immigrants in their first five years in Canada report twice the rate of work-related injuries requiring medical attention than Canadian-born male workers<sup>7</sup>. Immigration is, and will continue to be, an important source of population and economic growth for Ontario. Half of Canada's new immigrants settle in this province<sup>8</sup>. A better job must be done of reaching both immigrant workers and ethnic businesses by, for example, communicating in multiple languages to those with limited English or French language skills.

Part of the system's success depends on its ability to protect the most vulnerable workers. To be able to target enforcement activities and prevention programs to employers in sectors with the greatest number of vulnerable workers, the system partners must make better use of evidence and available tools. The strategy will use new approaches to reach vulnerable workers and provide them with appropriate information and supports.

To assist the most vulnerable workers, the system will take steps to:

**a) Understand all the factors that make workers vulnerable and how to provide support:**

- Conduct research and seek expert advice about the personal and workplace characteristics that contribute to vulnerability

- Seek input and advice from vulnerable worker groups about specific programs and policies to meet their needs, and how to improve outreach (e.g., through vulnerable worker task groups)



# 7.1



## Assist the Most Vulnerable Workers (Cont'd)

### b) Improve awareness of occupational health and safety rights and responsibilities among vulnerable workers:

- Leverage existing and new partnerships to increase outreach and provide occupational health and safety awareness materials through existing touch points and information channels (e.g., at the point of settlement, via existing government programs)
- Pursue non-traditional partnerships to reach vulnerable workers (e.g. community organizations, faith-based organizations, immigrant service organizations, youth and student organizations)

### c) Improve programs and services for vulnerable workers:

- Collaborate across government to coordinate services to meet the needs of vulnerable workers
- Tailor programs and supports to be inclusive of multiple cultures, languages and literacy levels
- Apply relevant research findings to design better programs for vulnerable workers

### d) Improve occupational health and safety outcomes among industries with high proportions of vulnerable workers:

- Target enforcement to workplaces with high proportions of vulnerable workers (e.g., underground economy, temporary agencies)

- Develop materials to help inspectors, industry and labour organizations educate vulnerable workers and employers of vulnerable groups about their rights and responsibilities (e.g., fact sheets)



**Part of the system's success depends on its ability to protect the most vulnerable workers.**

# 7.2



## Support Occupational Health and Safety Improvements in Small Businesses

Some businesses lack the resources, knowledge or willingness to meet occupational health and safety requirements. To reach workers at greatest risk, help must be provided to workplaces who are willing to implement occupational health and safety practices, but lack resources and knowledge. At the same time, we must use the full force of the law to ensure unwilling workplaces comply.



While the system serves all provincially regulated workplaces regardless of size, not all require the same level of support to be healthy and safe. For example, the size and structure of some large to medium-sized workplaces make it more likely they have the resources and expertise needed to prevent workplace illness, injuries and fatalities. These organizations may have well established occupational health and safety programs, including strong, well-functioning Joint Health and Safety Committees.

On the other hand, small businesses – defined as those with fewer than 50 workers – face unique issues that can make it more difficult for them to develop effective workplace health and safety practices. They may lack time and

expertise. They may be more heavily affected by the potential costs of meeting health and safety requirements, and more constrained in their ability to pay these costs. Small businesses are also more likely than larger ones to offer transient or precarious employment and to employ more new and immigrant workers – factors that may increase their occupational health and safety risks. Given that small businesses need the most help to achieve compliance, the system will focus prevention programs as well as targeted enforcement, when needed, on smaller workplaces.

# 7.2



## Support Occupational Health and Safety Improvements in Small Businesses (Cont'd)

### Activities to Help Support OHS in Small Businesses

- The Ministry of Labour has established a Small Business Task Group to provide a better understanding of the system needs of small businesses and their issues. As part of its 30-month mandate, the Task Group will identify new ways for the ministry to engage with small business stakeholders, moving beyond traditionally consulted organizations, industry and communities, and resulting in more responsive ministry and system partner activities and initiatives.
- System partners are building structures and processes to reach new businesses. For example, the ministry and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board are working to include occupational health and safety information in a new business registration kit.
- The ministry and the Health and Safety Associations are working with small business members of Chambers of Commerce in Eastern Ontario. An e-survey to learn more about small business' occupational health and safety needs and preferences was sent to members of Chambers of Commerce in Cornwall, Kingston, and Lindsay. System partners are working collaboratively with the Chambers to develop and implement occupational health and safety supports to meet the members' needs.

In its efforts to assist small businesses, the system must make available, when appropriate, accessible and free advisory services to meet those businesses' occupational health and safety needs. The system will also look to large and medium-sized workplaces to play a key role, leading by example, promoting safer and healthier workplaces across the province, and using forums such as industry associations to share best practices.

Larger companies can also influence others through their procurement requirements by, for example, requiring suppliers and sub-contractors to meet certain occupational health and safety requirements. As a system, we must do a better job of motivating large to medium-sized businesses to fulfil this leadership role.

# 7.2



## Support Occupational Health and Safety Improvements in Small Businesses (Cont'd)

To support occupational health and safety improvements in small business, the system will take steps to:

**a) Understand the health and safety needs of small businesses, including their current occupational health and safety knowledge, existing constraints, information needs and preferences for receiving information:**

- seek input and advice from small businesses about their health and safety needs
- reach out to and leverage ethnic businesses as occupational health and safety leaders in their communities

**b) Improve awareness of occupational health and safety requirements within small businesses:**

- leverage existing and new partnerships to increase outreach and provide occupational health and safety awareness materials through existing touch points and information channels (e.g., at point of new business registration, ServiceOntario)
- pursue non-traditional partnerships to reach small businesses (e.g., industry associations, business improvement associations, supply chain relationships with larger employers)


**c) Improve programs and services to meet the needs of small businesses:**

- develop accessible, cost effective and easy-to-understand training materials and resources that are tailored to small businesses' unique needs and help increase awareness and compliance


- target enforcement to the small businesses that present the greatest risk or are willfully non-compliant with the law

**d) Increase small businesses' understanding of the business case for occupational health and safety:**

- demonstrate how positive occupational health and safety outcomes can sustain productivity and economic growth (e.g., a program to help businesses calculate the business case for occupational health and safety investments, such as the Institute for Work & Health's "Safety Smart Planner")
- develop programs to motivate occupational health and safety performance beyond minimum compliance



**As a system, we must do a better job of motivating large to medium-sized businesses to fulfil this leadership role.**



# 7.3



## Address the Highest Hazards that Result in Occupational Injuries, Illnesses or Fatalities

While some workplaces need more attention because of their limited size and resources, others require greater focus from the system because the work they undertake is hazardous. Highly hazardous work is often linked to industries where injuries tend to occur most often, such as construction, manufacturing, mining, transportation and agriculture.



**There is often a lack of data linking specific work activities to reported injuries.**

However, sectors such as health care, education, retail, fire and policing services can also be considered highly hazardous due to issues such as workplace violence and musculoskeletal disorders.

High hazard work exists when the tasks lead to a greater frequency or severity of work-related injuries, illnesses and/or fatalities. High hazard activities can include hazards that may lead to traumatic or gradual onset injuries or illnesses such as diseases caused by exposure to hazardous agents. The system needs to put more emphasis on addressing work activities that increase the risk of workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities. To do this, we will focus on factors that could contribute to a tragic incident, such as lack of training, regulation or compliance.



Several important challenges exist in the efforts to address high risk activities. There is often a lack of data linking specific work activities to reported injuries. We are not always aware of emerging hazards created by new ways of doing work or new technologies. For example, stakeholders raised the issue of workplace-related mental injuries, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, where they say more research and action is needed.



# 7.3 >

## Address the Highest Hazards that Result in Occupational Injuries, Illnesses or Fatalities (Cont'd)

To be effective, the capacity and competency to identify and target emerging hazards must be expanded. This includes:

- New research to help understand the changing nature of the workplace
- A more comprehensive approach to measure health and safety risks
- New strategies to address high hazards including occupational disease



To address the highest hazards that result in occupational injuries, illnesses and fatalities, the system will take steps to:

**a) Improve use of data, information and research to identify activities with the greatest risks:**

- identify data, information and research gaps and implement strategies to fill the highest priority gaps
- improve service delivery by sharing and applying research results to create new and improve existing programs and services
- use best available data to act to reduce potential hazards – particularly when the risk of not acting could be very high
- work across government to share information and strategies to address hazards related to the underground economy

**b) Co-ordinate and focus resources on conditions of work with the highest rates of injury, illness and/or fatalities:**

- build on the work with Section 21 (appointed committees in specific sectors that advise the Ontario Labour Minister on OHSA issues) and other advisory committees to address high hazard activities
- continue to work with the system partners to develop co-ordinated awareness campaigns
- target non-compliant workplaces with the highest hazard activities with enforcement measures

# 7.3



## Address the Highest Hazards that Result in Occupational Injuries, Illnesses or Fatalities (Cont'd)

- c) **Develop additional rigorous training standards for specific high hazard work:**
- identify hazardous activities that should will be the subject of future mandatory training standards (in addition to those currently being developed)
  - promote more accessible training for high hazard work in remote regions
  - develop approaches to monitor quality of training against relevant standards

### Activities to Address Hazards

- In response to fatalities that occur from working at heights, *A Falls from Heights Coordinated Action Plan* is being created. System partners are co-operating to develop and implement co-ordinated awareness and enforcement activities.
- The Ministry of Labour launched a *Roundtable on Post Traumatic Mental Stress* to help workers who suffer from job-related, post-traumatic mental stress. The roundtable brought together representatives from sectors where workers may be at high risk to identify and share approaches and best practices in coping with post-traumatic mental stress in the workplace.
- The Ministry of Labour administers Ontario's Asbestos Workers Registry, which requires employers to report prescribed asbestos exposures to the registry. Joint analysis of the registry by the Occupational Cancer Research Centre and the ministry has provided information that will help ministry inspectors target future inspections and ensure asbestos operations are conducted in accordance with the related regulations, including registry reporting requirements.



# Goal 2: Enhance Service Delivery

The second goal of the strategy is to transform how the system plans and delivers occupational health and safety services. We must focus on integrating service delivery, enhancing partnerships and promoting a health and safety culture.

## 8.1 ➤ Integrate Service Delivery and System-Wide Planning

To transform the system, we must integrate service delivery and planning. A new, more integrated model of service delivery will help ensure all workplaces, regardless of which system partners they contact, receive accessible, affordable, consistent programs and services that meet their needs. System partners will come together to plan and deliver prevention awareness, training and enforcement activities that align with the strategic priorities.

We will also work with other stakeholders and partners to agree on how to achieve our mutual goals.

The creation of the Office of the Chief Prevention Officer was an important first step in bringing together the system's enforcement and prevention functions. It created a central authority within the Ministry of Labour with the ability to develop a strategy to guide and align the system.



# 8.1



## Integrate Service Delivery and System-Wide Planning (Cont'd)

A variety of approaches and tools have been identified to reach Ontario's diverse workplaces. These approaches can be thought of as a continuum of services – from awareness and education through to compliance and enforcement. Many organizations in the system provide services along the continuum, which can lead to duplication, inefficiencies, and mixed messages to the workplace parties.

**A variety of approaches and tools have been identified to reach Ontario's diverse workplaces.**

For example, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Safety Associations, private occupational health and safety service providers, and employers are all involved in raising awareness about health and safety requirements for residential roofers. To carry out an effective social marketing campaign and have the greatest impact, all of the organizations involved need to ensure their messages are aligned, yet tailored to their audiences. By working together to integrate service delivery and determining services based on need and evidence, the system can provide targeted, consistent, quality support regardless of whether an organization needs to improve its awareness, enhance its knowledge or achieve compliance.

Integrated service delivery also allows everyone in the system to focus on their strengths and increase their reach.

An integrated service delivery model will:

- improve access to and quality of services for all workplace parties
- improve accountability for spending and results
- increase collaboration among organizations to increase reach and avoid duplication



# 8.1



## Integrate Service Delivery and System-Wide Planning (Cont'd)

### Activities to Support Integrated Service Delivery

- The residential roofing sector is one of the most risky for falls from heights, and also one of the most difficult to reach. The Ministry of Labour and the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association have partnered to test a more integrated approach to planning and delivering prevention and enforcement services for roofers. The project included targeted enforcement of residential roofers by ministry inspectors, combined with jointly delivered awareness sessions held across the province.
- The ministry has been working with Workplace Safety and Prevention Services to pilot an integrated planning initiative serving the Niagara wine industry. The pilot aims to raise awareness, educate and target enforcement to improve occupational health and safety outcomes. Other partners include the Wine Council of Ontario and Grape Growers of Ontario. Reaching out to this sector is one means of helping vulnerable workers. This sector often employs temporary foreign labour and these workers are often unaware of their rights under the Employment Standards Act and OHSA.

To help integrate service delivery and planning, the system will take steps to:

- a) Clarify roles of system partners and the services they provide:**
- document and communicate the roles, products and services of each system partner to both the other members of the system and workplace parties
  - address issues that could be barriers to sharing information or expertise among system partners, while recognizing the need to keep some information confidential

# 8.1



## Integrate Service Delivery and System-Wide Planning (Cont'd)

### b) Increase integrated planning among all system partners:

- develop inclusive forums that enable all system partners to participate in planning and identifying joint priorities (e.g., inter-organizational committees and working groups)
- continue to share information and best practices that can be used to support joint planning and service delivery

### c) Improve client experience and access to services:

- develop programs and services that can be delivered in partnership, that include information on resources and compliance requirements, when appropriate, (e.g., awareness sessions delivered by the ministry and Health and Safety Associations)

- ensure clients are directed to the occupational health and safety services that best meet their needs (e.g., strengthen relationships with other ministries, municipalities and other potential partners who interact with employers and workers)

### d) Strengthen system partners' capacity to track their performance and be accountable:

- develop a set of common performance measures for the system and its impact on workplace parties
- publish an annual report on system performance





# 8.2

## Build Collaborative Partnerships between the Occupational Health and Safety System and other Organizations

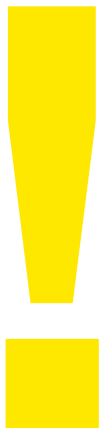
To enhance service delivery, we must do more than work together as a system to deliver programs and services to workplaces. We must also work with, and through, new partners beyond the current system, some of whom may not realize their ability to influence health and safety.

Both the panel report and the Ministry of Labour's stakeholder consultation recommended a shift in how we work with other organizations and a shift in the technology required to support these partnerships. By using new methods to leverage existing relationships, and by forging new strategic partnerships, service delivery can be enhanced by:

- gaining a better understanding of workplaces' needs
- expanding program reach to workplaces that are typically difficult to target through inspections (e.g., the underground economy)
- encouraging workplaces with extensive health and safety expertise to assist those that lack occupational health and safety knowledge and resources
- finding new opportunities to communicate awareness messages
- identifying health and safety leaders within new communities and workplaces

We are more effective when we work together to achieve a common goal. By collaborating closely with our partners, everyone has the opportunity to leverage one another's strengths, use resources more effectively, and achieve better outcomes for all Ontarians.

**We are more effective when we work together to achieve a common goal.**



# 8.2

## Build Collaborative Partnerships between the Occupational Health and Safety System and other Organizations (Cont'd)

### Examples of Unique Strengths of Partners

- **Health and Safety Associations** have sector and hazard-specific knowledge, established employer/employee networks, and experience developing and delivering awareness and training.
- **Community organizations**, such as those serving immigrants, understand the needs of these groups and can provide access to networks that can be used to disseminate culturally appropriate occupational health and safety awareness resources.
- **Other provincial ministries**, such as the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, have established contacts (i.e., touch points) with vulnerable workers and small businesses (e.g., through new business registration).
- **Individual employers** have the ability to affect occupational health and safety outcomes by implementing workplace policies and practices and by influencing:
  - other businesses through business associations and business relationships
  - their respective sector industries through their supply chains.

For example, the Ministry of Labour partnered with Infrastructure Ontario to embed occupational health and safety criteria into their procurement processes for vendors of record.

To enhance partnerships, the system will:

- a) Increase engagement with partners within and outside the system:**
  - create new forums or mechanisms through which to solicit ongoing feedback and advice from partners
- b) Use existing and new partnerships to reach a wider audience and promote system resources:**
  - continue to strengthen relationships with existing partners and ministries
  - develop new, non-traditional partnerships to reach new audiences

# 8.2 >

## Build Collaborative Partnerships between the Occupational Health and Safety System and other Organizations (Cont'd)

- identify health and safety leaders in new sectors and communities to champion occupational health and safety
- explore new technologies to help partners share information

### c) Partner with other ministries and levels of government to share intelligence and enhance enforcement efforts.



### Activities to Build Collaborative Partnerships

- The Ministry of Labour continues to work with the Ministry of Education to find new opportunities to reinforce workplace health and safety education in school curriculum and by supporting teachers to deliver safety lessons through the Ministry of Labour's "Live Safe! Work Smart!" suite of classroom resources.
- The Ministry of Labour and the Office of the Fire Marshall and Emergency Management jointly developed and implemented an outreach strategy to help municipalities and fire services understand their legislated compliance obligations, as mandated by OHS and the Fire Protection and Prevention Act.
- Through its Mobile Training Classroom, Labourers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) Local 183, the largest construction union local in North America, provides on-site health and safety training in a climate-controlled classroom on wheels. LIUNA's Local 183 Training Centre is a training partner with the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA). It uses IHSA curriculum for many safety classes delivered to its members at its various campuses and in the Mobile Training Classroom, which can go anywhere in Ontario.

# 8.3

## Promote a Culture of Health and Safety in Workplaces and Throughout Society

To achieve a significant, sustained improvement in the health and safety of Ontario's workplaces, we must all place a high value on occupational health and safety in the workplace and throughout society. To prevent harm to workers, we must promote an occupational health and safety culture that reflects shared values, beliefs and attitudes.

In the workplace, the extent to which there is a culture of health and safety is reflected in the Internal Responsibility System (IRS) and whether everyone in the organization has opportunities to participate in and take responsibility for occupational health and safety. Workplaces that have strong occupational health and safety values, attitudes, practices and systems tend to have fewer workplace illnesses, injuries

and fatalities<sup>4,5,9,10</sup>. To create that culture in all workplaces, the strategy will help promote a strong IRS, including Joint Health and Safety Committees and Health and Safety Representatives.

At the societal level, a culture of health and safety depends on the attitudes and beliefs of Ontarians. Society, as a whole, can play a key role in preventing harm as it has done, for example, by decreasing

### Activities to Promote a Culture of Health and Safety

- The Institute for Work and Health developed an eight-item tool that provides insight into an organization's health and safety culture, and has been shown to be related to past workplace injuries. This work is an important step in developing an effective leading indicators measurement tool.
- The Ministry of Labour is planning a multi-year social awareness strategy aimed at significantly reducing public tolerance of workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities (a Panel recommendation). The awareness strategy will try to shift societal attitudes, beliefs and behaviours related to occupational health and safety.

# 8.3



## Promote a Culture of Health and Safety in Workplaces and Throughout Society (Cont'd)

smoking, increasing the use of seatbelts, and decreasing impaired driving. In each of these cases, many organizations were part of a persistent, multi-pronged social marketing initiative that helped shift social attitudes and behaviours. For example, increasing the use of seatbelts involved policy changes, police enforcement, awareness campaigns and technological changes.

To promote an occupational health and safety culture, we need to reinforce the widespread view that workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities are unacceptable.

Stronger societal support for workplace health and safety also aligns with, and can contribute to, a broader approach to health and wellness. For the strategy to be successful, the system must build awareness among the public that occupational health and safety is important and that everyone has a role to play in making Ontario workplaces healthy and safe. This message must be communicated to all Ontarians, particularly to young Ontarians, and encourage them to take steps to prevent workplace injuries, illness and fatalities.

To promote an occupational health and safety culture in workplaces and throughout society, the system will take steps to:

- a) Understand society's attitudes, beliefs and behaviours related to occupational health and safety and how they have changed over time:**
- support research to understand public knowledge and attitudes about occupational health and safety
  - benchmark current attitudes and beliefs to be able to measure changes over time
  - use findings to identify gaps, target awareness strategies and improve safety practices



**To promote an occupational health and safety culture, we need to reinforce the widespread view that workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities are unacceptable.**

# 8.3

## Promote a Culture of Health and Safety in Workplaces and Throughout Society (Cont'd)

### b) Foster social awareness of the importance of occupational health and safety and the Internal Responsibility System:

- target social marketing, advertising and direct communications to workplaces (including awareness materials) and other settings (e.g., homes, schools) and sectors
- reinforce awareness to school-aged Ontarians to ensure they have the tools to be healthy and safe before they start work

### c) Nurture health and safety leaders and champions in the community and workplaces:

- introduce programs to recognize occupational health and safety leaders in all types of organizations

- introduce programs to recognize leaders in corporate social responsibility with the goal of influencing their peers, consumers and other industries
- make the Ontario government a leader in procurement policies that promote occupational health and safety and encouraging large private sector organizations to adopt similar policies for their supply chains

### d) Ensure health and safety programs foster a culture of openness and inclusiveness – rather than blame and reprisals – in the reporting of hazards:

- consider programs that recognize workers and supervisors who openly address hazards and make improvements





# Measuring Our Performance

To measure our performance, we need an effective way to track progress in implementing the strategy. The Ministry of Labour is responsible for the system-wide performance measurement framework, which will be used to monitor and track progress, prepare annual reports on the strategy and drive evidence-based decision-making. The performance framework will be used to help re-evaluate system efforts each year and determine whether or not our course needs to be adjusted.

The measures below were selected based on system-level priorities and the availability of data to support measurement.

Over the long-term, the ministry will develop a full suite of qualitative and quantitative output and outcome measures, including lagging and leading indicators.

To be able to measure progress, we need to be innovative in the way we collect and use data. The first step will be to build a robust data system that will improve the ability to capture and report data.



**To be able to measure progress, we need to be innovative in the way we collect and use data.**

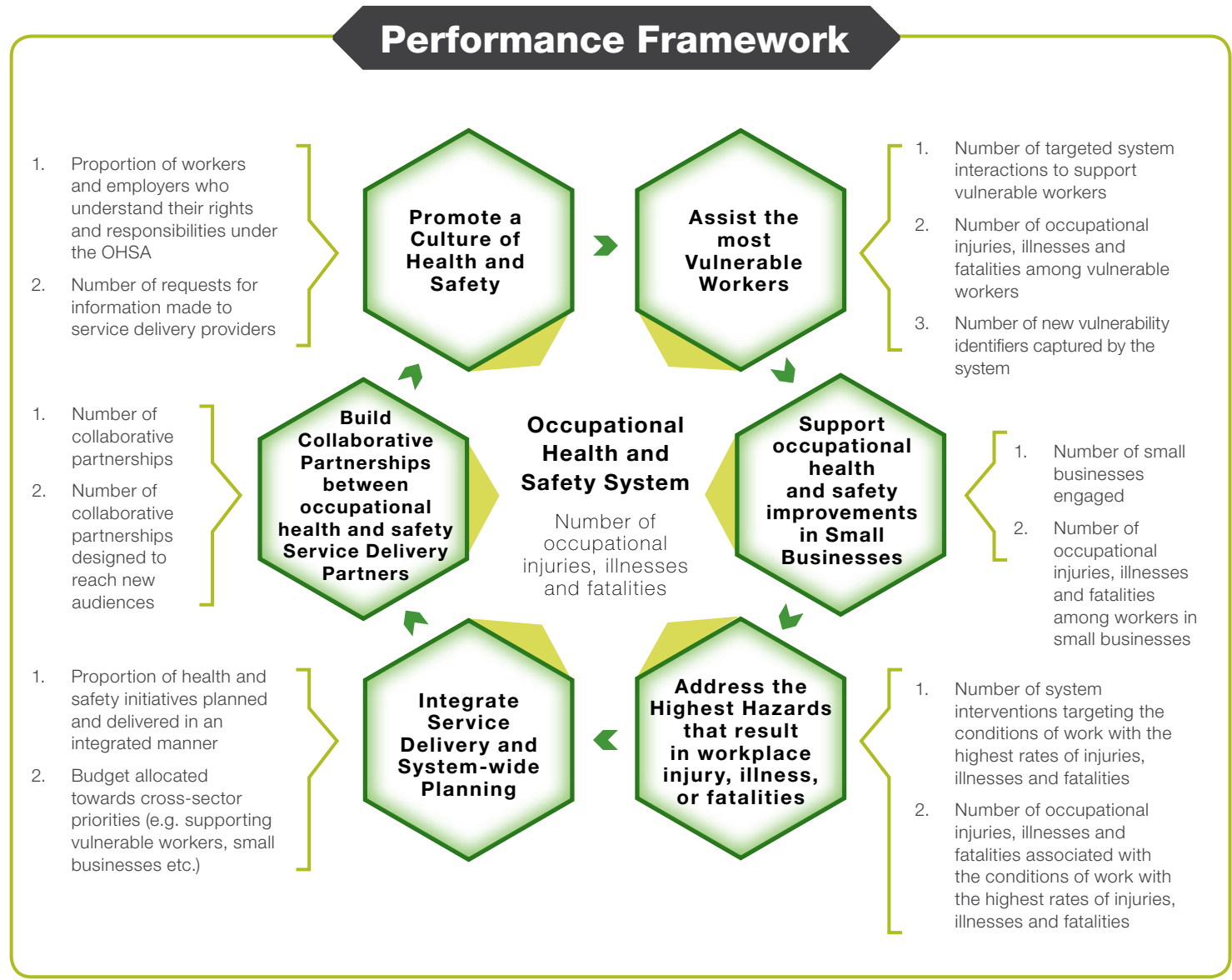


We must also develop new ways to use data analytics to better understand and identify risk, and help focus resources where they will have the greatest impact. The data system is a longer-term goal. However, a fully functional data system is a critical step in improving the system's accountability.





# Measuring our performance (Cont'd)



# 10

## Conclusion

This strategy is designed to help achieve the vision of healthy and safe Ontario workplaces. It is a catalyst to transform the way the system works.

Over the next five years, all organizations will need to align their efforts – to focus on the six strategic priorities and to achieve the two strategic goals: target the areas of greatest need and enhance service delivery.

The Ministry of Labour is calling on all workplaces to recognize the importance of occupational health and safety, and to act through their own programs, policies and initiatives to support the goals and six priorities.

### Healthy and Safe Ontario Workplaces

#### Target the Areas of Greatest Need

Assist the most **Vulnerable Workers**

Support occupational health and safety improvements in **Small Businesses**

Address the **Highest Hazards** that result in occupational injuries, illnesses or diseases

#### Enhance Service Delivery

Build **Collaborative Partnerships**

**Integrate Service Delivery** and system-wide planning

Promote a **Culture of Health and Safety**

Ministry of Labour

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Health and Safety Associations

Employers in all sectors

Non-Governmental Organizations

Government



Organizations can develop operational plans aligned to priorities through their activities / programs / policies; through joint efforts we can make a bigger impact

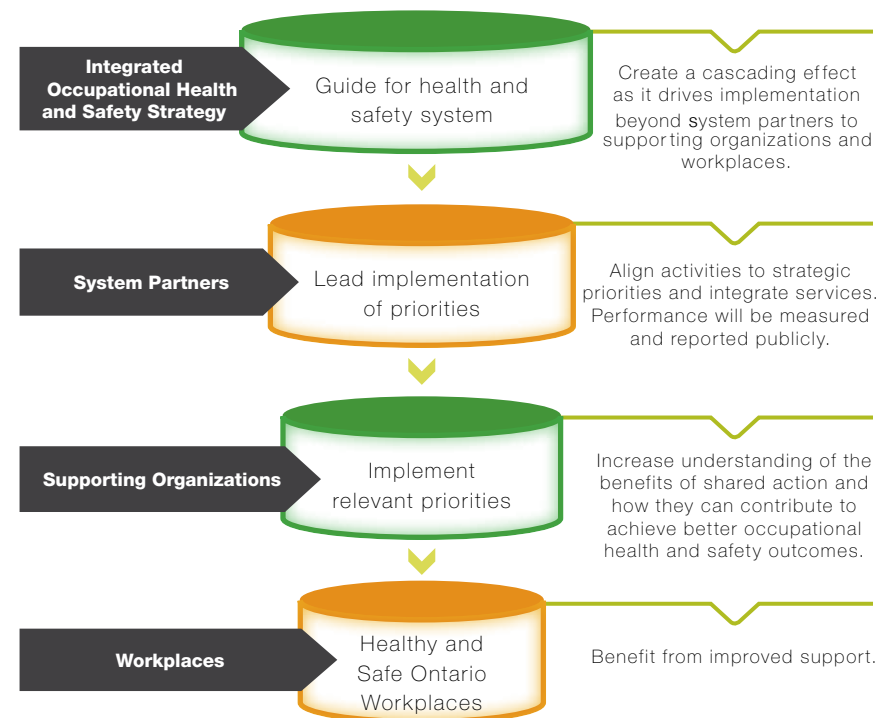
# 10

## Conclusions (Cont'd)

Going forward, the Chief Prevention Officer, with the advice of the Prevention Council, will contribute to achieving these strategic priorities by:

- working with the ministry to align its operational plans, programs and policies with the strategy
- working with the Health and Safety Associations and the WSIB to align their operational plans with the strategy
- motivating workplace parties and the private training community to participate in the strategy
- collaborating with all levels of government, other ministries and non-governmental organizations to achieve common goals

The Chief Prevention Officer will also issue annual reports that will describe progress in implementing the strategy and its impact, and hold all system partners accountable.



# 10

## Conclusions (Cont'd)

The Ministry of Labour will play a strong leadership role in the strategy. All organizations and individuals in Ontario are encouraged to be part of the success that is possible through our combined efforts. While the ministry can use its enforcement and prevention tools to have considerable influence over occupational health and safety, much broader support and action are needed to fully achieve the vision. To have the desired impacts – to reduce occupational illnesses and injuries, and save lives – the support of the entire occupational health and safety community is needed. Only by working together can every workplace in the province be healthy and safe.

Please contact the Ministry of Labour for questions related to the strategy:

**Online:**

<http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/feedback/>

**By mail:**

400 University Avenue,  
14th Floor, Toronto  
ON M7A 1T7; OR

Contact the system partners with questions related to compensation, health and safety training / advisory services or workplace clinical services through the contact information available on our website:

<http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/websites.php>



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