



What's New in HR Law

Ontario Government Extends March Break- Publicly Funded School Closures

March 13, 2020

COVID-19 Update

Following our earlier updates on [January 29, 2020](#) and [March 9, 2020](#), on March 12, 2020, the Ontario Government announced that all publicly funded schools in Ontario will be closed for two weeks after March break as a result of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Some childcare programs which are situated in and operate out of publicly funded schools have also announced that they will be closing over the March Break period. Publicly funded schools are not scheduled to reopen until April 5, 2020, meaning that some workers across the Province may be without pre-arranged childcare for a period of at least three weeks.

Advice for Employers

While there have been no other announcements of closures by the Ontario Government to date, it remains to be seen what, if any, further business or operational closures may be

This update is for general discussion purposes and does not constitute legal advice or an opinion.

[Filion Wakely Thorup Angeletti LLP](#) www.filion.on.ca

Toronto

Bay Adelaide Centre
333 Bay Street, Suite 2500, PO Box 44
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2R2
tel 416.408.3221 | fax 416.408.4814
toronto@filion.on.ca

London

620A Richmond Street, 2nd Floor
London, Ontario N6A 5J9
tel 519.433.7270 | fax 519.433.4453
london@filion.on.ca

Hamilton

1 King Street West, Suite 1201, Box
57030
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4W9
tel 905.526.8904 | fax 905.577.0805
hamilton@filion.on.ca

mandated. Employers can expect their employees to be impacted by the school closures and should prepare for reduced staff availability until at least April 5, 2020.

Employees may be entitled to applicable leaves of absence under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*, including 3 days of unpaid Family Responsibility Leave and 3 days of unpaid Sick Leave. Employees may also be entitled to additional time off work based on their individual employment contract, workplace policies, or applicable collective agreement. Even if no statutory or contractual leave is available to an employee, employers may have to consider accommodating absences during any period of school closure under the *Human Rights Code* on the basis of family status, as parents may have limited options for alternative sources of childcare given the circumstances.

Employers should also consider the flexible application of workplace policies including allowing employees to use vacation time during periods of school closure in order to avoid income loss. Alternatively, employers may consider instituting temporary “work-from-home” measures, if appropriate. Employers are encouraged to take a proactive approach in order to alleviate scheduling concerns before school closures commence.

Future Updates

Our firm continues to closely monitor the developments surrounding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and will continue to provide further updates as new information becomes available.

Need more information?

For more information regarding workplace management amidst the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, contact [Derek Klatt](#) at 416-408-5506, or your regular lawyer at the firm.



Toronto
Bay Adelaide Centre
333 Bay Street, Suite 2500,
PO Box 44
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2R2
tel: 416.408.3221
fax: 416.408.4814
toronto@filion.on.ca



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fax: 519.433.4453
london@filion.on.ca

Hamilton
1 King Street West, Suite 1201
Box 57030
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4W9
tel: 905.526.8904
fax: 905.577.0805
hamilton@filion.on.ca