

FEBRUARY 2025 MONTH IN REVIEW

A roundup of new legislation, regulations, government announcements, court cases, and arbitration rulings.

Federal

LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Transportation Safety

Feb 10: New *Motor Vehicle Safety Act* [regulations](#) require all vehicle and vehicle equipment manufacturers to publish safety recall information on their websites. Previously, manufacturers only had to mail recall information to affected owners. In addition, designated vehicle manufacturers must provide a new Vehicle Identification Number tool allowing users to quickly check which recalls apply to their vehicle by looking up their 17-digit VIN.

Emergency Response

Jan 29: The federal government modernized the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA) program, which provides money to help provinces and territories recover after being struck by disasters. The changes will take effect on April 1, 2025, including new incentives for risk reduction, pre-disaster planning, and improved hazard awareness to reduce the risks and impacts of disasters.

Action Point: Being prepared for workplace emergencies is a legal requirement that can save countless lives. Use the OHS Insider template to create a legally sound [Emergency Preparedness & Response Policy](#) at your workplace.

Infectious Illness

Jan 29: Measles activity is on the rise in Canada, with outbreaks reported in Ontario and Québec. The majority of measles cases involve unvaccinated people, including children and infants under one-year-old who are too young to have been vaccinated, who have not yet had the opportunity to be vaccinated.

Action Point: Use the [OHS Insider Infection Exposure Control Plan](#) template to guard against measles, COVID and other potential infectious illness outbreaks at your workplace.

New Laws

Jan 17: Between April 1 and September 30, 2024, ESDC conducted 649 employer compliance inspections, of which 11% were found non-compliant. Administrative Monetary Penalties were \$2.1 million, more than double in the same period in 2023. In addition, 20 employers were banned from the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, a fivefold increase from last year.

New Laws

Jan 30: The federal government launched 2 new pilot programs, called the Rural Community Immigration Pilot and the Francophone Community Immigration Pilot, to help rural and French speaking minority communities outside of Québec attract and retain skilled immigrants.

New Laws

Jan 27: The federal Competition Bureau published a new [What We Heard Report](#) summarizing the public feedback it received on how artificial intelligence affects economic competition. One of the key takeaways is the finding that AI can lead to anti-competitive conduct that may require new laws and enforcement mechanisms.

Privacy

Feb 6: The federal government rolled out a new long-term [National Cyber Security Strategy](#) to protect Canadian citizens and businesses from digital threats. The new NCSS follows a whole-of-society approach in which all segments of society play a role in building national resilience to cyber threats.

Drugs & Alcohol

Feb 4: The Canadian Government appointed a new Fentanyl Czar to work with U.S. officials to combat fentanyl smuggling. Meanwhile, the RCMP launched a Canada-U.S. Joint Strike Force targeting organized crime, fentanyl, and money laundering in both countries.

Environmental

Jan 28: The Government of Canada said it will provide another \$300 million to the On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF) over the next 3 years to help farmers adopt cover cropping, nitrogen management, rotational grazing, and other practices to cut greenhouse gas emissions and erosion while making their businesses more climate resilient.

CASES

Work Refusal: Government Employee Loses COVID-19 Work Refusal

With the COVID threat receding, Elections Canada implemented a new hybrid return to work policy. Although he had been working at the office during the pandemic, an employee was worried that the return of remote workers would increase his risks of

contracting COVID. So, he initiated a work refusal. After an internal investigation found no imminent danger, the employee exercised his right to call in a government investigator. The OHS official agreed that the agency's health measures were adequate and so did the workplace JHSC and agency's Head of Compliance, the latter of which characterized the employee's fears as "speculative" and continued refusal "frivolous." But the employee stuck to his guns and the case went to the federal court which rejected the employee's appeal and ordered him to pay \$2,000 in legal costs [[*Juzda v. Canada \(Attorney General\)*](#), 2025 FC 63 (CanLII), January 13, 2025].

Action Point: While it involves COVID, this case is still very relevant, especially given the recent spike in reported outbreaks of infectious illnesses across the country. Threat of workplace infection can lead to OHS work refusals. Go to the OHS Insider site for an [explanation of the ground rules](#) that courts and regulators use to determine whether an infectious illness work refusal is justified.