

# Federal

## LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### New Laws

Jan 19: For the fourth year in a row, the federal government exceeded its Francophone immigration target in 2025, at about 8.9% of admissions of French-speaking permanent residents outside Québec, above the target 8.5%. Starting in 2026, Ottawa will reserve 5,000 federal selection spaces to allow provinces and territories to designate French-speaking immigrants in addition to their annual Provincial Nominee Program allocations.

**Action Point:** Expect more of your workforce to speak a language other than English and find out [whether OHS laws require you to provide multilingual safety training](#) to your workers.

### New Laws

Jan 28: Newly tabled income tax legislation provides a one-time top-up payment equal to 50% of the increase in the maximum annual Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax credit (GSTC), to be paid by June 2026. [Bill C-19](#) also increases the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit by 25% for five years starting in July 2026. Combined, the legislation provides Canadians over \$11.3 billion in tax relief.

### New Laws

Feb 27: That's the last day to [comment](#) on a federal Competition Bureau market study into the state of competition in the financing sector for small and medium-sized enterprises. Key issues include the barriers faced by lenders seeking to enter the market and how to make it easier for businesses to switch lenders.

### Industry Challenges

Jan 19: The new Canadian Forest Sector Transformation Task Force held its first meeting and will soon launch a web portal to gather public feedback. Options on the table include expansion of mass timber, modular systems, and prefabricated building solutions for homebuilding and support for product diversification, including advanced wood materials and bioproducts.

### Accessibility

Mar 12: That's the deadline for companies to [apply](#) for federal Enabling Accessibility Fund grants of \$500,000 to \$1 million for construction, renovation, and retrofit projects aimed at making workplaces safer and more accessible for persons with disabilities. EAF funding is open to non-profits, for-profits, Indigenous organizations and municipal and territorial governments for projects lasting up to 24 months.

**Action Point:** [Ensure that your own workplace emergency response and evacuation policy](#) accounts for the disabled so that vulnerable people don't get left behind when fires and other emergencies happen.

## Workplace Violence

Feb 13: February 13<sup>th</sup> is the last day to apply for government funding of up to \$500,000 per year for 3 years for projects to promote safer, more inclusive and more equitable workplaces in private sector industries that are federally regulated.

Funding will be provided through 2 existing streams: the [Workplace Opportunities: Removing Barriers to Equity](#) (WORBE) program and the [Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Fund](#) (WHVPF).

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement an effective [Workplace Violence and Harassment Compliance Game Plan](#) at your site.

## Privacy

Jan 1: Providing for easy and secure transfer of personal data from one insurance service provider to another would save Canadians between \$1.1 billion and \$3.8 billion per year. That's the conclusion of a new [report](#) from the Competition Bureau. The potential savings from enabling data portability across the broader Canadian economy would be even greater.

## Environmental

Feb 28: [Comments](#) close on [proposed amendments to important federal Regulations](#) that are designed to phase out the manufacture, import and sale of six categories single-use plastics that are harmful to the environment and difficult to recycle.

**Action Point:** Find out about the sweeping [federal single-use plastics regulations](#) and how to comply with them.

## CASES

### Return To Work: OK to Fire Government Employee for Fitness for Duty Non-Cooperation

A government employee was allowed to work from home while the employer investigated his OHS work refusal about being “watched” in the office. As his behaviour grew increasingly erratic, the employer placed the employee on paid leave and asked him to undergo a fitness for work evaluation to ensure it was safe for him to come back to work. But the employee failed to submit the required medical information or show up for appointments. So, after 9 months of non-cooperation, the employer changed his leave status; 8 months later, it terminated his employment. The employee claimed unjust discipline, but the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board rejected his grievances, finding that the employer's actions weren't disciplinary but rather an attempt to resolve its fitness for duty concerns and that it was the employee who failed to cooperate. The federal court found the Board's ruling reasonable and refused to overturn it [[Osman v. Canada \(Attorney General\)](#), 2026 FCA 5 (CanLII), January 13, 2026].

**Action Point:** The takeaway from *Osman* is that employers have a legitimate right and even a legal duty to verify that workers are fit for duty and that workers must cooperate in physical and mental fitness for duty assessment. Such assessment often occurs during the return-to-work process. Find out how to implement a legally sound [Return to Work Compliance Game Plan](#) for injured workers.