

NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Expanding Cancer Coverage for Firefighters

Changes will allow thyroid and pancreatic cancer claims to be processed faster

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[Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development](#)

TORONTO — The Ontario government is working for workers by expanding cancer coverage for firefighters. These changes will make it faster and easier for these heroes and their families to access the compensation and supports they deserve for thyroid and pancreatic cancers from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

“In every community, firefighters are on the front lines each and every day saving lives,” said Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. “These everyday heroes work tirelessly to protect the communities we live in and, in return, they deserve to get the care and support they need. By expanding the list of presumptive cancers to include thyroid and pancreatic cancers, firefighters will get faster access to compensation and other benefits, ultimately supporting their recovery.”

Firefighters die of cancer at a rate up to four times higher than the general population. On average, 50 to 60 firefighters die of cancer yearly in Canada, and half of those are from Ontario. Proposed changes by the government will streamline the assessment of WSIB claims by presuming they are work-related.

“Firefighters put service over self each day, ready to approach dangerous situations to protect their communities,” said Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General. “In recognition of their courage, we have a duty to enhance the safety, health, and wellness of our community heroes. By expanding WSIB coverage for firefighters to include thyroid and pancreatic cancers, we continue to promote better health outcomes, while honouring their service.”

Expanded coverage for claims related to thyroid and pancreatic cancers would be retroactive to January 1, 1960. These changes would apply to full-time, volunteer, and part-time firefighters, firefighters employed by First Nations band councils and fire investigators.

“Preventive measures, early detection and support for those suffering and/or succumbing to occupational cancer while serving the residents of Ontario, have proven to be a priority for this government through the unwavering support of Premier Doug Ford, the Minister of Labour Monte McNaughton and Solicitor General Michael Kerzner,” said Greg Horton, President of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. “With the addition of pancreatic and thyroid cancers to the list of illnesses already presumed to have come from a long career in firefighting, the Ontario government is sending the message that the health and safety of these first responders is a priority.”

These regulatory amendments are part of a larger package that expands on the ground-breaking actions in the *Working for Workers Acts, 2021* and *2022*, which are already helping millions of people by introducing additional supports that embrace the future of work.

Quick Facts

- There are 437 fire departments and about 30,000 firefighters in Ontario, including about 12,000 full-time firefighters, nearly 19,000 volunteer firefighters and more than 400 part-time firefighters.
 - Five Canadian jurisdictions (Yukon, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and British Columbia) have recently added presumptive entitlement for thyroid and pancreatic cancers.
 - The WSIB, which is completely funded by employer premiums, provides wage-loss benefits, medical coverage, and support to help people get back to work after a work-related injury or illness.
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Quotes

"Every year, an estimated 10,000 cancer cases in Canada are due to exposures to cancer-causing substances in the workplace. That's 10,000 cancer cases that didn't need to happen, because workplace-related cancers can be prevented. The Canadian Cancer Society applauds changes to coverage like those announced today by the Ontario government that better protect Ontarians from occupational exposure. Firefighters provide a tremendous service to our communities and for the protections they provide to our safety, it's important the same protections against occupational exposure be provided back to them."

- Kelly Masotti

Vice President of Advocacy, Canadian Cancer Society

"The World Health Organization has reclassified firefighting to its highest level of occupational risk for cancer. Today's announcement proves that Ontario's provincial government is putting firefighters and their families first, by providing faster access to supports and benefits that will aid Ontario's firefighters in their recoveries."

- Rob Grimwood

President of Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC)

"When anybody is facing a work-related illness, we are here to help. Our team gets to work as quickly as possible to help people and this change will help us get started faster for firefighters and fire investigators with thyroid and pancreatic cancers. "

- Jeffery Lang

President and CEO of the WSIB

Additional Resources

- [Learn about the Working for Workers Act, 2022](#)
 - [Learn about the Working for Workers Act, 2021](#)
 - [Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997](#)
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