

Ontario government issues discussion paper on hours of work

Date : January 1, 2004

On January 19, 2004, the Ontario government announced its intention to introduce legislation that would ensure that employees cannot be forced to work up to 60 hours a week. To this end, it issued a discussion paper entitled "Ending the 60-hour Work Week" in which it is asking all interested persons to provide input by Friday, February 27, 2004.

The government wants to ensure that employees are not forced to work more than 48 hours a week, while allowing businesses the flexibility to operate with longer hours when needed. The main question to address is how to regulate hours after 48 hours a week. The discussion paper faults both the old permit system for being overly complex, and the current system, which was introduced under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*, for not providing sufficient protection for employees. (For an explanation of the current rules on overtime, see ["Parental leave, overtime rules among major changes in new Employment Standards Act"](#) and ["Emergency leave and agreements under the ESA 2000: new variables in the workplace mix"](#) on our Publications page.)

The discussion paper includes two model systems for regulating overtime hours, although it invites other suggestions. Both models would require employees to enter into written agreements if they wish to work more than 48 hours - a feature of the current system - but would also require Ministry of Labour permits for any employee who works more than 48 hours.

Interested persons may obtain a copy of "Ending the 60-hour Work Week" at www.gov.on.ca/LAB/english/es/dp/index.html.