

Annual Report

2024 – 2025

OEA | Office of the
Employer Adviser

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Message to Stakeholders

I am pleased to present the Ontario Office of the Employer Adviser's Annual Report for this year. Over the past year, the OEA provided timely, expert advice and representation to small and medium-sized employers on WSIB and OHSA s.50 matters, helping employers navigate the system and meet obligations efficiently. We reached employers through our webinar program, presentations to employer associations, and supported individual employers with their WSIB issues and OHSA unlawful reprisal issues. In a rapidly changing business landscape, we have remained committed to providing timely, expert advice and representation to small and medium-sized employers, ensuring employers have clear information, access to representation, and practical options to resolve issues. By delivering these services with professionalism and empathy, we continue to enhance the confidence and trust that employers place in our office.

This year's report reflects our commitment to improving access to our services. Looking ahead, we are committed to expanding in-person and virtual engagement and fostering partnerships and discussions to align services with evolving employer needs. We remain focused on collaboration and continuous improvement, so employers are well-positioned to meet legal and safety obligations.

In closing, I extend my gratitude to our dedicated staff, partners, and stakeholders for their work and commitment to our shared goals. We remain focused on collaboration and adapting to the evolving needs of the employer community, ensuring that Ontario's employers are well-positioned to succeed while meeting their legal and safety obligations. Thank you for your continued trust and support as we work together in the workplace safety and insurance system.

Susan Adams
OEA Director

OEA Mandate

The Office of the Employer Adviser (OEA) is established by Section 176(2) of the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997* (the WSIA), “to educate, advise and represent primarily those employers with fewer than 100 employees, in issues arising under the WSIA”.

The OEA mandate also includes section 50 of the Ontario *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), and its Regulation 33/12 to “educate, advise and represent in proceedings before the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) employers that have fewer than 50 employees”. This section of OHSA relates to worker allegations that they have been unfairly treated by their employer after raising a health and safety issue.

OEA VISION

An Ontario in which small and medium-sized businesses operate safe, fair, and high-performing workplaces that contribute to a vibrant, competitive economy.

OEA MISSION

The OEA’s mission is to provide practical, expert advice, representation and education to Ontario employers regarding workplace safety and insurance and OHSA s.50 matters. Our representation work focuses on employers with fewer than 100 employees in the workplace safety and insurance mandate and fewer than 50 employees in the OHSA unlawful reprisal mandate.

Overview of Program and Activities

How the Program Works

The OEA helps Ontario employers manage workplace safety and insurance issues and meet their obligations under the Workplace Safety and Insurance (WSI) system in a timely and cost-effective manner. It is critical for employers to understand the complex system, understand requirements, strengthen compliance, and improve workplace outcomes; and OEA services are available to help. Clients using OEA services receive timely access to accurate information, make better business decisions, operate safer workplaces and avoid appeals.

The agency is funded by employer premiums and administrative fees paid to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (the Board or WSIB). Services are prepaid through WSIB premiums; there is no additional charge to clients, thus ensuring the ready availability of expert and confidential advice. This is especially important for small employers, since they typically do not have expert resources available in-house.

The program operates with two steps: the OEA Advice Team and our Representation Team. These teams are comprised of legal professionals, both paralegals and lawyers, licensed by the Law Society of Ontario, who are specialists in workplace safety and insurance law.

The OEA Advice Team responds to calls and emails with individualized information for all Ontario employers who have WSI questions or concerns. Complex matters are triaged to the Representation Team.

The Representation team focuses on cases at both the WSIB and at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal (WSIAT). At the WSIB operating level, representation services involve negotiation through telephone calls and correspondence. At the two (2) appeal levels, the WSIB Appeals Division and the WSIAT, the team works with employers to attend hearings and meetings, prepares written submissions and attends return-to-work or work re-integration negotiations.

For OHSA unlawful reprisals, the team supports employers with applications at the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

The education program raises awareness of OEA services through webinars, presentations and digital channels. Education and information are currently focussed on presentations to employer groups, our webinar series, and growing our LinkedIn following.

Advice Team

The OEA Advice Team is the agency’s first point of contact for employers, responding to questions from the main phone lines and email address (i.e. AskOEA@ontario.ca). The team assists employers to resolve disputes early in the WSIB process, providing information to support returning injured workers back to work safely, completing forms, and providing employers with practical advice on claims and account matters. Employer questions may take minutes or hours, depending on the complexity of the issue(s) to discuss. The OEA Representation Team also contributes at an early advice stage, usually in more restricted circumstances, such as responding to questions arising during a webinar presentation.

During 2024-25, the OEA assisted the employer community with 1,311 advice questions. The key issue for employers was claims management (39%). Questions about employer accounts (19%) and Return to Work issues (18%) were received at a similar frequency; followed by entitlement issues (11%) and a number of uncategorized issues (13%).

Fiscal Year	Advice
2024-25	1,311
2023-24	1,769
2022-23	1,148

Representation Services, Workplace Safety and Insurance

Fiscal year 2024-25 was a transition year for the OEA from a staffing perspective, particular for the Representation Team. Several team members retired, necessary recruitment activities were completed, and new subject matter experts were onboarded, many of whom started in Q1 2025-26.

The OEA’s regionally located Employer Specialists provide representation to Ontario employers at all levels of the WSIB and at the WSIAT. Our involvement in return to work (RTW) plans and negotiations support solutions that returns employees to the job in a timely, safe and cost-effective manner. Similarly, agency staff work closely with the employers to understand WSIB adjudication and make cost effective decisions about next steps.

During 2024-25, there were 177 representation cases opened and 167 closed. These key performance indicators reflect milestones in the team’s representation work. The team resolved 61% of disputes without a formal hearing through negotiation and early resolution pathways, compared to 74% last fiscal year and 67% during 2022-23.

Fiscal Year	Cases Opened	Cases Closed	Hearings and Mediations	Negotiations
2024-25	177	167	92	108
2023-24	190	291	109	116
2022-23	201	371	98	98

While discussion and negotiation efforts often successfully conclude cases at the Board’s operating level, many cases do proceed to appeal. Some employers do not learn of the availability of the OEA’s pre-paid services until their case has progressed to the appeal stage. In a system where most appeals are initiated by the injured person, OEA representation ensures that employers’ perspectives are heard and considered.

When employers contact the agency for representation, the focus is most often at the appeals levels about entitlement issues, followed by questions about employer accounts.

Issue Types in Representation Cases

Issue	2024-25
Entitlement	52%
Employer accounts	20%
Return to Work	18%
Claims Management	11%
Other	2%

Representation for OHSA s. 50

The OEA provided the following services for Ontario employers facing Section 50 reprisal complaints before the Ontario Labour Relations Board in 2024-2025:

- 47 advice calls
- 10 file representation cases opened

Representation cases at the OLRB are time sensitive due to the time limits in the process. Cases that proceed to the OLRB start with a mediation and generally resolve at that stage. Settlements range from Letters of Employment to monetary payments; most matters resolve at mediation. In most settled cases, the employer receives a full and final release of claims arising from employment or the termination.

OEA Clients

The OEA’s mandate is to serve primarily those employers with fewer than 100 workers. The agency’s Representation Team conducts a merit review before representation is offered, which includes questions about an employer’s staff count. During the year, 65% of represented clients reported fewer than 50 employees and 11% of OEA represented clients had over 100 employees.

At the first step of the agency's process, the Advice Team will engage with all incoming calls from employers to provide case specific advice and support. This approach supports an accessible WSI system in which employers understand their rights and are supported to meet responsibilities. Education sessions are also open to all employers for registration.

The construction sector is a key client service area for the OEA at 23% of all active employer contact during this period, which reflects the significant impact of Board policies on this sector. Other key sectors included manufacturing (15%), transportation and storage (5%), and retail and wholesale trades (11%).

Client Satisfaction

The current client satisfaction metrics are based primarily on e-mail surveys from a cross-section of the Advice and Representation Teams. Surveys are sent at the conclusion of a client's interaction with the team, that is after their question has been answered (by the Advice Team), and/or after an appeals case has been closed (by the Representation Team).

Clients are asked whether they were satisfied with OEA services (yes-no), whether they would recommend the OEA to other employers (yes-no) and whether they have comments to share. The survey responses indicate a 91% client satisfaction rate, with 94% of clients willing to recommend OEA services to other employers.

Client satisfaction metrics continue to be higher than the target level of 90% and indicate a client community that is appreciative of the work done on their behalf by specialist staff.

Education and Raising Awareness of OEA Services

The agency's education work raises awareness of services and supports greater awareness about the WSI system, WSIB policies and processes, OHSA s. 50 reprisals and the services that the OEA offers to employers, prepaid through WSIB insurance premiums.

The OEA makes information available to employers in a variety of formats. The OEA shares updates, practical tips and information with Ontario employers and stakeholders about our areas of specialty using webinars, presentations to employer groups through associations and system partners, our website (www.employeradviser.ca), social media via LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter) @askOEA, and e-mailed newsletters.

During the fiscal year, and leading into 2025-26, there are more opportunities for in person engagements and presentations. The team appreciated meeting employers and system partners in person, for example, as an exhibitor and presenter at the Partners in Prevention tradeshow in May 2025, hosted by Workplace Safety Prevention Services (WSPS) and the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA). The participation resulted in many conversations with employers and several presentation requests.

It is an ongoing area of work for the OEA to remain ‘front-of-mind’ as a primary resource for Ontario employers about their workers’ compensation issues. The key outreach and marketing goal for OEA is to increase awareness of our prepaid (free), expert, and confidential services across all business sectors and sustaining that awareness among our client community.

Website, www.employeradviser.ca

The website ensures that employers have ready access to the information they need to meet their WSI responsibilities. Employers have options to reach out for assistance through a contact form on the website, our email address (askOEA@ontario.ca), and our toll free and local phone numbers.

Live Webinars

Webinars are an effective and popular way to fulfill the OEA education mandate, directly providing relevant information to employers and aligning with the convenience of virtual meetings.

Our webinars cover such topics as completing a Form 7, return to work, claims management, and introduction to workplace safety and insurance. The webinars were

presented in a series during February-April 2024, resulting in five (5) webinars offered to employers during this fiscal year. The preparation during the following months resulted in six (6) webinars presented in the next fiscal year, during May and June 2025, following the 2025 provincial election.

Newsletter

Newsletters are sent periodically, advising on noteworthy developments arising within the WSI system as well as to promote our webinar series. The distribution list consists of email addresses obtained from the WSIB from employers who signed up for e-services, along with clients of the OEA and presentation participants. During 2024-25, one (1) newsletter was prepared, which was then sent in early May 2025, following the provincial election.

LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter)

The agency has a presence on LinkedIn and X (Twitter) to share updates and practical reminders in French and English. As of March 31, 2025, the OEA has approximately 2,400 followers on X (formerly Twitter) and a growing following on LinkedIn. New posts are available several days a week about updates on WSIB policy, items from the OEA website, notices for upcoming webinars and special items when the Board issues news releases, for instance premium changes for the upcoming year. During 2024-25 the agency developed 82 posts that were translated to French and available on LinkedIn and X. This included promoting the agency's webinars in April 2024. From April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, LinkedIn posts attracted over 14,000 impressions.

Expert Staff

During the year, OEA legal professionals attend training sessions to meet their continuing professional development requirements for the Law Society of Ontario. The team appreciates presentations by the WSIB and the WSIAT to keep up to date on policy and process changes.

Employer Associations

The OEA management team actively participates in meetings and events of stakeholder organizations, including the Ontario Business Coalition, the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, and Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters.

System Partners

The OEA engages with the WSIB at all levels of the business: claims, revenue, appeals, policy consultations and stakeholder relations. The agency values and nurtures these connections. This year, the OEA contributed to the WSIB's Independent Living Policy review, Phase 2 consultation.

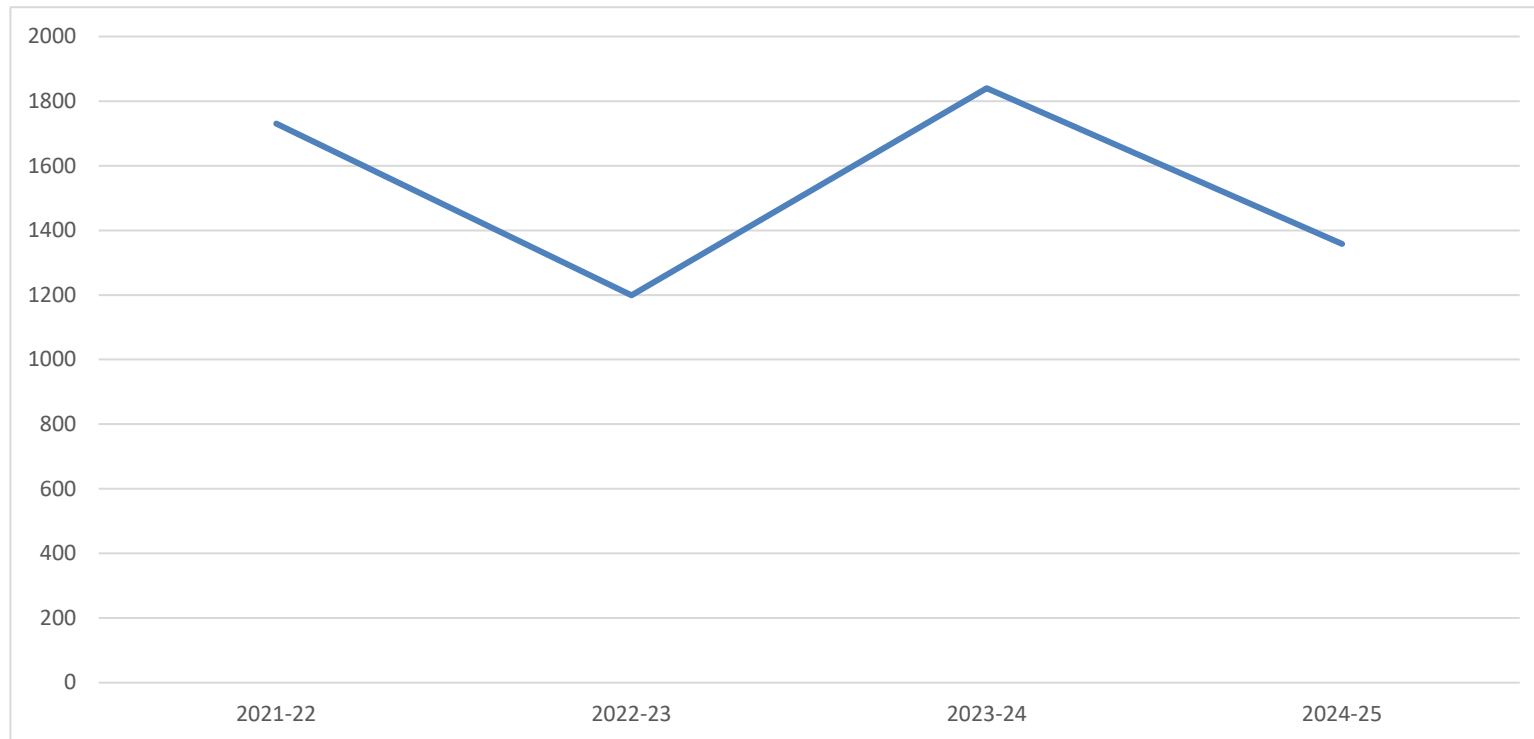
Health and Safety Associations are valuable partners, and appreciated supports for raising awareness of OEA services through presentations. During the year, the team presented at events organized by Workplace Safety Prevention Services (WSPS) in London and Windsor.

OEA staff engage with the WSIAT process regularly and our expert staff appreciate the Tribunal's public sessions. As a member of the WSIAT Advisory Group, the OEA contributed feedback to a Guide about "Adding a Related Issue to an Appeal" and as part of an Occupational Disease process project. The OEA collaborates with the Office of the Worker Adviser on shared issues as opportunities arise.

Appendix A: OEA Performance Measures

KEY ACTIVITY: ADVICE AND REPRESENTATION SERVICES

PERFORMANCE MEASURE FOR 2024-25 -- ADVICE PROVIDED TO EMPLOYERS



	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Advice Provided	1,730	1,199	1,840	1,358

Appendix A: OEA Performance Measures

What do the results show?

Advice numbers decreased compared to last fiscal year due to the timing of the webinar series in late spring 2025, which was postponed to Q1 2025-26 due to the provincial election. Advice numbers capture the different topics raised by clients during interactions, questions from the agency's webinar series and questions about OHSA unlawful reprisal issues.

Agency Contribution

The OEA provides information and legal advice to employers about their WSIB related questions and issues and supports employers with their questions about s. 50 OHSA reprisal matters. This program helps employers navigate the workplace safety and insurance system.

2024-25 Commitment

The agency's goal was to increase advice services by 5-10% compared to 2023-24, this was not achieved.

Long-term Target

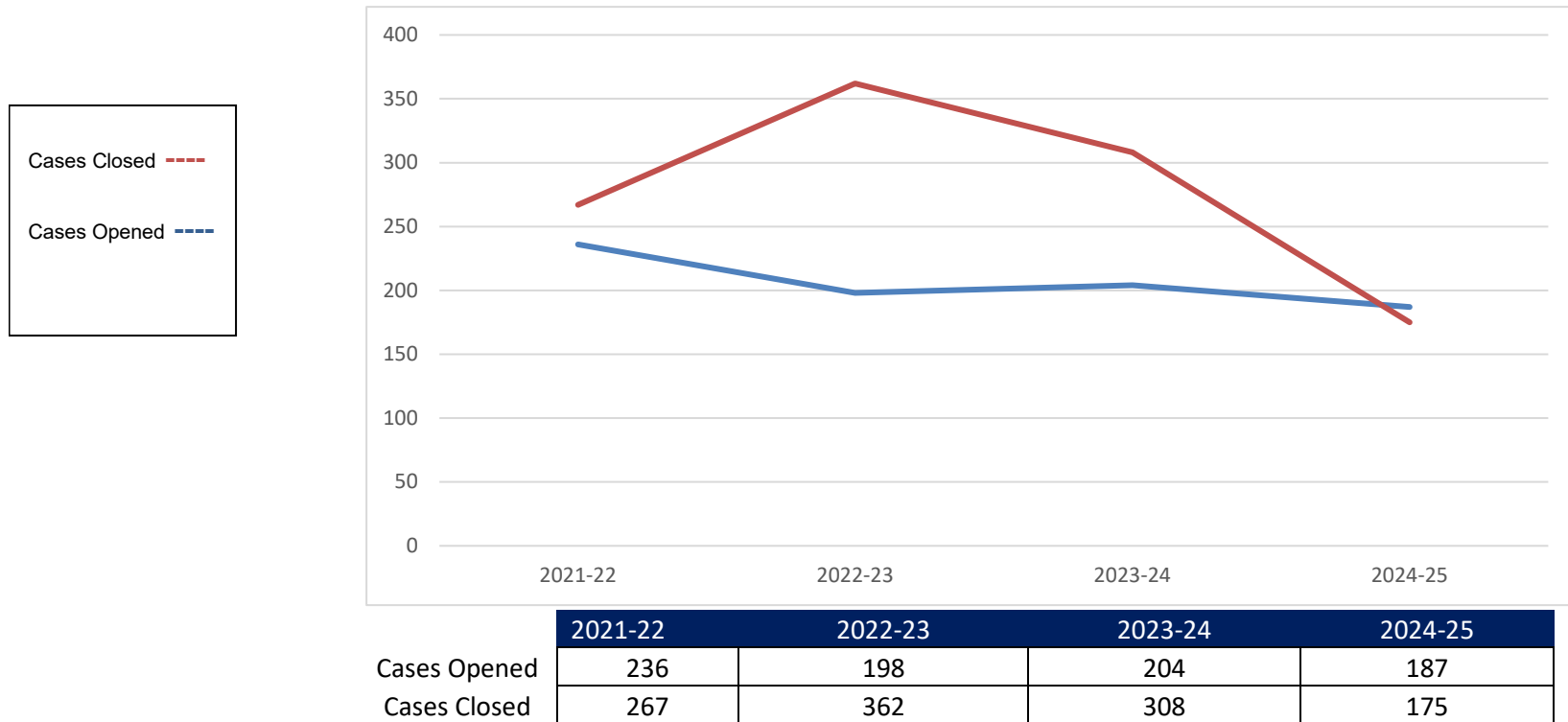
The agency's 3–5-year goal is to achieve incrementally higher areas of advice offered to employers.

Note: This is an existing measure.

Appendix A: OEA Performance Measures

Key Activity: Advice and Representation Services

Performance measure for 2024-25: Opened and Closed Representation Cases



Appendix A: OEA Performance Measures

Agency Contribution

The agency's expert staff provide representation at the WSIB, WSIAT and at the OLRB for OHSA unlawful reprisals.

Employers value the legal services in specialized areas of law, our services are pre-paid through WSIB premiums and enable small-mid sized business owners to focus their time and energy on their business.

What Does the Graph Show?

Representation cases decreased slightly during the fiscal year.

2024-25 Commitment

Increase opened cases by 5-10% over 2023-24. Target not met due to timing and staffing transitions; corrective actions (content updates, recruitment, scheduling cadence) are in place for 2025–26.

Long-term Target

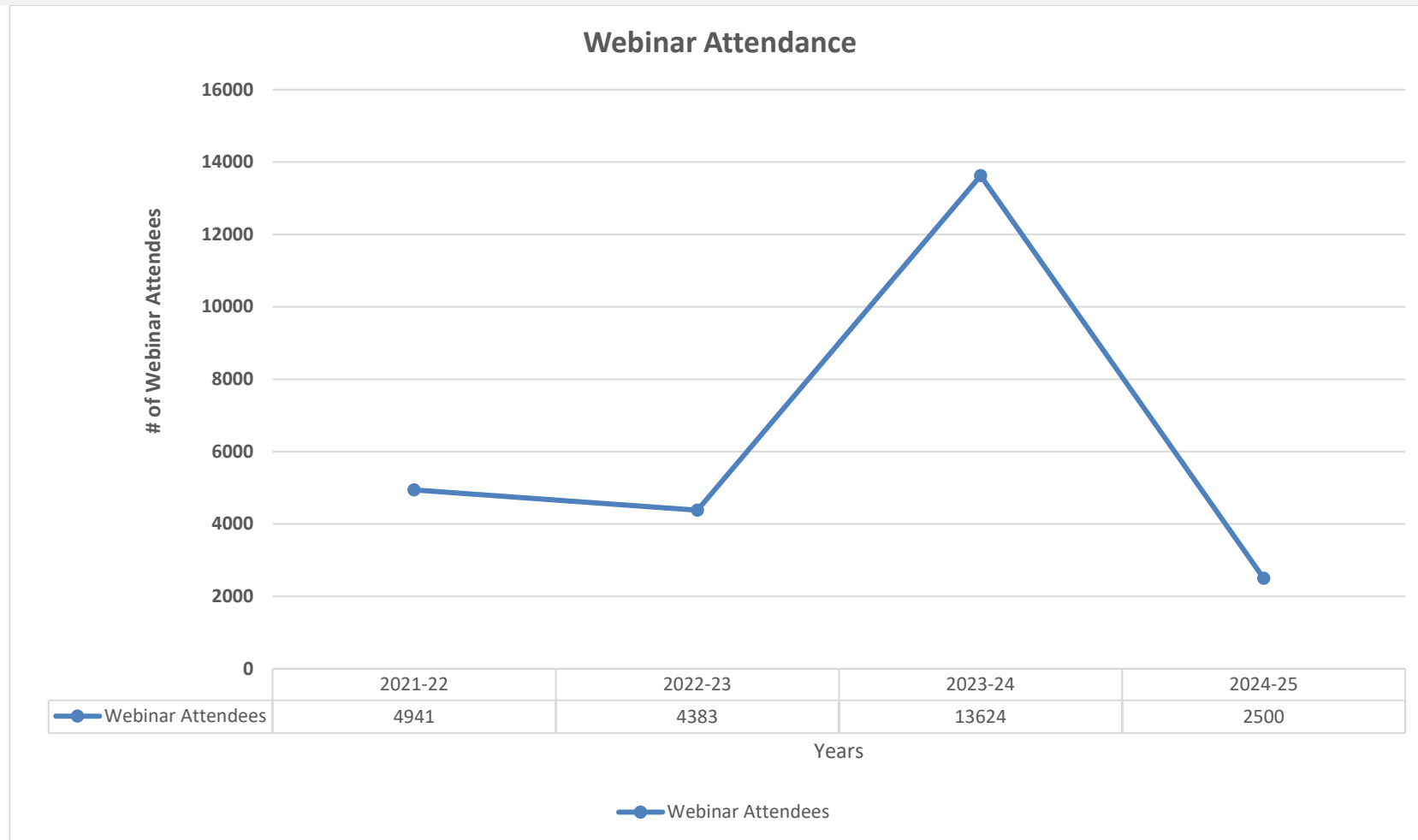
The long-term target is to increase representation cases year over year to support more small-mid sized businesses with their WSIB and OHSA reprisal issues.

Note: This is an existing measure.

Appendix A: OEA Performance Measures

KEY ACTIVITIES: EDUCATION AND INFORMATION TO EMPLOYERS

PERFORMANCE MEASURE FOR 2024-25: WEBINAR SESSION REGISTRATION



Appendix A: OEA Performance Measures

Agency Contribution

The OEA is a key source of information for employers about WSIB matters, including claims issues, registering a business with WSIB and premium rates, and OHSA unlawful reprisals.

The agency works on a series of webinar sessions that are presented live to share information with employers, raise awareness of responsibilities and draw attention to OEA services.

What does the graph show?

Webinars consistently draw an audience of Ontario employers. Attendee statistics depend, in part, on the number of webinars presented. During this fiscal year, a Q4 newsletter and webinar presentations were deferred to the next fiscal year (2025-26) due to the provincial election.

2024-25 Commitments

The agency presented webinars during February, March and April 2024. This report reflects the April 2024 webinar results for the fiscal year April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025. Following the webinars, the focus was on updating content, onboarding new team members and deferring appropriate work during the 2025 provincial election. Webinar topics were presented next in the 2025-26 fiscal year, during May and June 2025.

Long-Term Target

The long-term commitment is to offer two (2) webinar series each year, with updates in response to feedback and questions. Note that some years will focus on updating the content, resulting in fewer webinars offered during that year.

Note: This is an existing measure.

Appendix B: OEA Financial Report

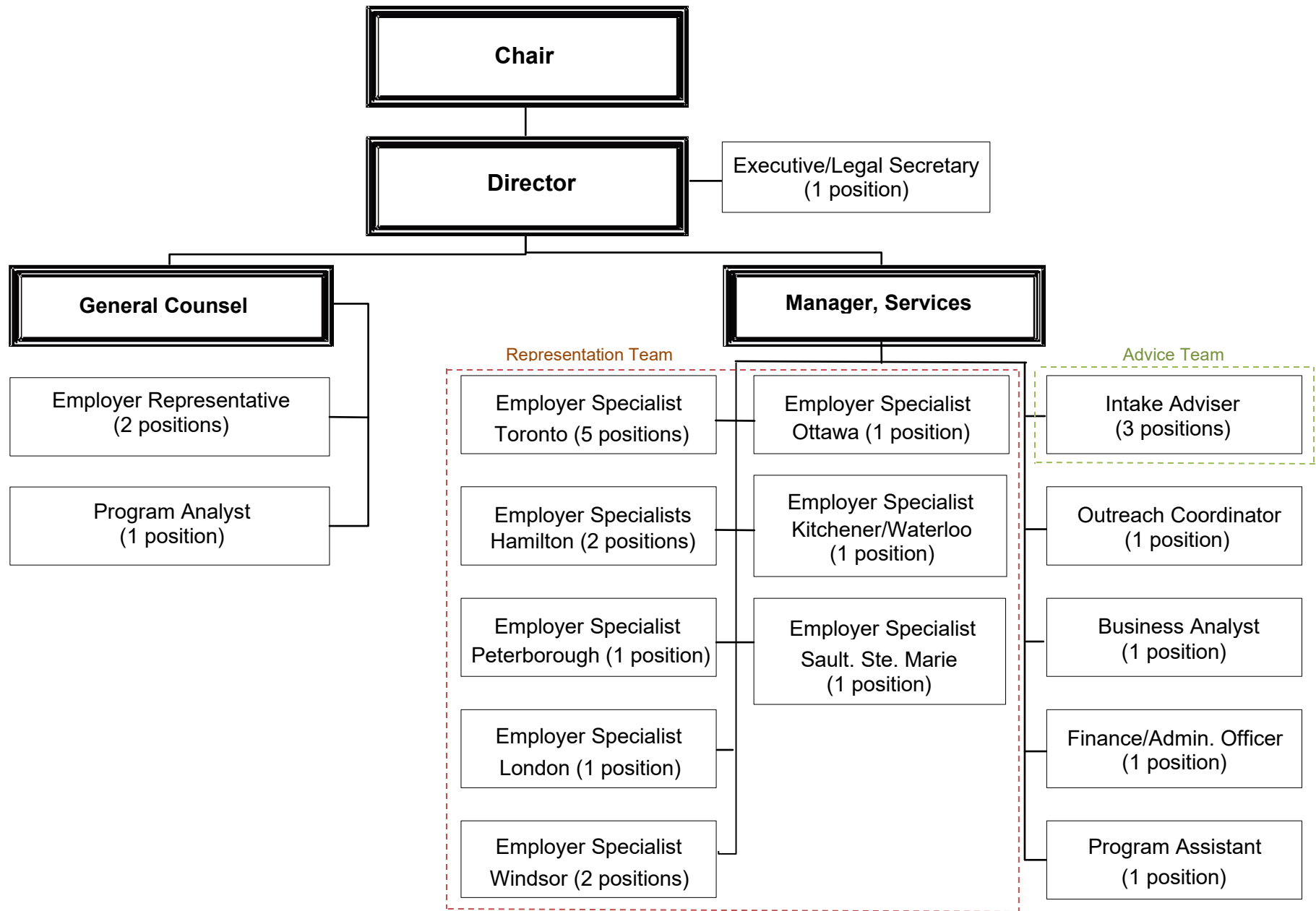
All figures in thousands of dollars (\$000s); percentages shown in % Variance

Account	FY 2024-25				Variance	% Variance
	Expenditure Estimates	In-year Board Approvals	Year-end Budget	Year-end Actuals		
Salaries & Wages	2,753.6	(204.1)	2,549.5	2,475.7	73.8	2.9%
Benefits	734.20	-	734.2	812.4	(78.2)	-10.7%
ODOE:			-			
Transportation & Communication	148.7	(110.0)	38.7	31.6	7.1	18.4%
Services	292.9	(30.0)	262.9	142.0	120.9	46.0%
Supplies & Equipment	89.8	(60.0)	29.8	14.3	15.5	52.1%
Total ODOE	531.4	(200.0)	331.4	187.8	143.6	43.3%
Grand Total	4,019.2	(404.1)	3,615.1	3,475.9	139.2	3.8%

Variances: Additional retirements compared to expected numbers led to a variance in Benefits; fewer in person hearings, mediations and presentations plus recruitment timelines led to variances in Transportation and Communication and in Supplies and Equipment; and, for Services, changing timelines for marketing initiatives.

Reporting of Appointee Remuneration, 2024-25			
Appointee	Total Annual Remuneration	Per Diem Remuneration Rate	Appointment Period
OEA Chair, Dimanis, Dimitrios (Jim)	\$2137.50	\$225	June 17, 2021 to May 26, 2025

Appendix C: OEA Organization Chart



Appendix C: OEA Organization Chart

Chair

- Director

Director

- 1 General Counsel
- 1 Manager, Services
- 1 Executive / Legal Secretary

General Counsel

- 2 Employer Representatives
- 1 Program Analyst

Manager, Services

- 1 Outreach Coordinator
- 1 Business Analyst
- 1 Finance / Admin Officer
- 1 Program Assistant

Advice Team:

- 3 Intake Advisers

Representation Team:

- 5 Employer Specialists – Toronto
- 2 Employer Specialists – Hamilton
- 1 Employer Specialist – Peterborough
- 1 Employer Specialist – London
- 2 Employer Specialists – Windsor
- 1 Employer Specialist – Ottawa
- 1 Employer Specialist – Kitchener/Waterloo
- 1 Employer Specialist – Sault. Ste. Marie

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