

OFFICE OF THE EMPLOYER ADVISER

BUSINESS PLAN

2026-2027

TO

2028-2029

Ontario 

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Mandate, Vision, and Mission	3
Program Overview - Services for Ontario's Employers.....	4
Risk Identification, Assessment and Mitigation	5
Strategic Directions.....	6
Performance Measures and Annual Targets	8
Statistics.....	9
Client Feedback.....	11
Communication Plan.....	11
Stakeholder and System Partner Engagement.....	12
Resources to Meet Goals and Objectives.....	13
Artificial Intelligence (AI).....	13
Appendix A: Financial Resources	14
Appendix B: Organization Structure.....	15
Appendix C: Performance Measures	16

Business Plan 2026-2029

Executive Summary

The Office of the Employer Adviser (OEA) meets the needs of Ontario employers by providing legal advice, representation and education on issues relating to the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997* (WSIA) and unlawful reprisal matters under section 50 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA).

OEA expert legal advice in a specialized subject area mitigates employer costs and saves employer time navigating a detailed process. The availability of expert, prepaid (free), confidential services is a benefit to small and mid-sized employers.

During the upcoming fiscal years, the agency will promote awareness among smaller business employers about how OEA province wide services can serve employers. The OEA raises awareness through live webinars, our website, presentations, engagement with stakeholder associations, local networking, e-mailed newsletters and social media.

Expert OEA staff and their dedication to excellent client service are the source of the agency's success. Ongoing training, mentoring and resources are essential to maintain expertise and stay current with new developments. The agency will also pursue continuous improvement of our tools and processes.

We look forward to serving the employer community and stakeholders during 2026-29 with expert and practical advice, grounded in excellent client service.

Mandate, Vision, and Mission

Mandate

Pursuant to section 176(2) of the WSIA the mandate of the Office of the Employer Adviser is to educate, advise and represent primarily those employers with fewer than 100 employees, in issues arising under the WSIA.

The OEA provides expert, timely, practical legal advice, information, and representation before adjudicative tribunals on a full range of workplace safety and insurance issues to employers participating in the workplace safety and insurance system.

The OEA is also responsible for advice, education, and representation services to Ontario employers with fewer than 50 employees on unlawful reprisal matters under section 50 of the OHSA.

Vision

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

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 employers in the OHSA unlawful reprisal mandate.

Program Overview - Services for Ontario's Employers

The OEA protects Ontario's economy by:

- Supporting employers with Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) issues, mitigating costs and saving business's time
- Helping employers understand and meet their on-going WSIA obligations
- Raising awareness about workplace responsibilities
- Supporting employers with OHS section 50 worker reprisal applications at the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB)

In November 2020, the final report was released of an operational review of the WSIB conducted by Linda Regner Dykeman and Sean Speer. The authors noted that "[s]takeholders rarely agree on Workplace Safety and Insurance Board-related matters but there is near universal recognition that the Office of Worker Adviser and Office of the Employer Adviser provide useful services to help non-unionized workers and small employers navigate WSIB adjudication, appeals and the broader occupational health and safety system."

Advice

The OEA Advice Centre provides comprehensive legal advice to employers on all workplace safety and insurance system issues and general information for section 50 reprisal questions. Inquiries are typically received centrally by our Advisers via phone and e-mail at askOEA@ontario.ca. Clients also call their local Specialist (embedded in regional areas) for advice and assistance.

Each interaction (i.e. incoming question, and OEA response) is recorded as an Advice. They can be general or specific to an individual employer's circumstance.

The OEA website, at www.employeradviser.ca, is a readily accessible means for employers to get answers to straightforward issues and includes a web form for employer specific questions or feedback.

Representation

The OEA's regional team of Specialists represent employers with appeals at the WSIB and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal (WSIAT). We also provide

advice and representation to employers with fewer than 50 employees regarding section 50 unlawful reprisal applications at the OLRB.

Each appeal (WSIB, WSIAT) or reprisal complaint (OLRB) is recorded as a Case and is assigned to an OEA legal expert to provide representation services. One employer with multiple appeals related to different issues, will have multiple Cases.

Education

The OEA focuses on the education of Ontario employers about workplace safety and insurance and occupational health and safety section 50 unlawful reprisal matters through its website, webinars, social media, e-mailed newsletter, and presentations.

Risk Identification, Assessment and Mitigation

1) External Factors

a) WSIB and WSIAT

The OEA team is affected by changes and disruptions at its adjudicative system partners, the WSIB and the WSIAT.

For example, employers are gradually asking more questions about their premium rate calculations, including class/subclass rates and the potential effects of claims costs on their business's rate calculation under the WSIB's new Rate Framework. Employers have also reached out with questions about the WSIB's audit program. And, Bill 30, *Working for Workers Seven Act, 2025* amended the WSIA to include additional monetary penalties for certain employer responsibilities.

The OEA team is here to help employers adapt to system changes.

i) Mitigation

During the fiscal year, the team monitors WSIB announcements, policy agenda, website and engagement opportunities to identify upcoming system changes. To keep updated, the team then attends sessions or engages with WSIB stakeholder relations to request

a dedicated learning session. Similarly for WSIAT, the team attends stakeholder sessions and we participate on their Advisory Group, which are both opportunities to monitor updates and assess whether a more focused session would be helpful.

2) Internal Factors

The OEA has a highly skilled and dedicated team who provide specialized legal advice and representation to employers. OEA staff located around the province meets our commitment for regional service delivery, nearby local businesses.

a) Potential Retirements

The agency benefits from the skills and expertise of our experienced staff. When retirements occur, there is a risk of financial pressure on our budget.

i) Mitigation

Recruitment and onboarding are the key mitigation factors, supported by training and mentoring for newer staff. Mentors are assigned to support learning the specialized adjudicative processes of the workplace safety and insurance system. The team also regularly engages in peer led information sharing to further support learning and in doing so helps retain knowledge.

Digital Delivery

Video hearing participation, client feedback surveys, search engine optimization, and social media and website content are tools that help the OEA effectively raise awareness of services. We leverage OPS digital learning tools and resources to keep updated.

Strategic Directions

1. Promote awareness about how OEA services can help smaller business employers.

The agency shares information with Ontario employers, clients and stakeholders using webinars and presentations, our website, e-mailed newsletters and social media.

The OEA protects Ontario by providing practical advice about WSIB claims and costs issues, enabling employers to make strategic decisions focused to their individual circumstances.

a) Webinars

In the current fiscal year, 2025-26, the OEA presented six (6) webinars in May and June 2025 that attracted 2,324 attendees. This was followed by three (3) webinars in November and December 2025, attracting 835 attendees. The agency offers 1-2 webinar series per year, depending on content update needs, which flows from process and policy changes at system partners. A series of webinars is offered over several weeks. An employer can choose to watch the whole series or dip into topics of interest.

Live webinar sessions focus on substantive issues affecting employers and include topics such as return to work, appeals process updates, and Section 50 unlawful reprisals. The content is approachable for individuals newly assigned to workers' compensation matters at their workplace, and serve as refreshers for individuals with some experience already. Work is underway to add details to sessions that will continue to engage more experienced system users.

Participants can ask questions during sessions. Local Specialists will also reach out and follow up to discuss questions particular to individual employer's circumstances.

Live webinars are scheduled and advertised using e-mailed newsletters, LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter).

Through technology, the OEA uses its resources effectively to share information with employers about workplace safety and insurance responsibilities and occupational health and safety unlawful reprisals.

b) Digital Tools and Social Media

The agency will continue work to grow our LinkedIn presence and add web content. These digital tools share practical information with our community and encourages employers to reach out to OEA with questions.

c) Conferences

We will seek presenter opportunities at conferences and attend select in person tradeshow as an exhibitor. In fiscal year 2025-26, attendance at the Partners in Prevention (PIP) regional health and safety conferences generated engagement with employers and speaking opportunities. Participation with PIP will continue in 2026-27.

2. Supporting Expert Staff

Advice, representation and education services rely on our dedicated, expert, and inclusive staff. The team delivers better service for Ontario employers by simplifying interactions with the detailed WSIB and WSIAT processes; offering practical advice that enables employers to make strategic, cost-effective decisions about their workplace safety and insurance system responsibilities and issues.

The OEA's ongoing commitment is to maintain a high level of knowledge about the workplace safety and insurance law, the system, and changes in policy and procedures at the WSIB. The OEA provides team members with sufficient hours to meet their Law Society of Ontario (LSO) continuing professional development hours and keep updated on WSIB policy and related changes.

Similarly, to meet the agency's section 50 obligations under the OHSA, staff will keep current about developments related to employers' duties and rights in reprisal situations through such methods as self-study, presentations to colleagues and updates from the OLRB.

Learning for our corporate services team includes digital awareness, plain language writing and accessibility to support the agency's strategic projects.

Performance Measures and Annual Targets

Our goal is to increase the advice and representation services provided to Ontario employers.

Performance measures:

- Advice and information provided to employers
- Representation work through Opened and Closed cases

We are tracking our progress to increase Advice and Representation by 10% during the three (3) year period of 2026-29 compared to fiscal year 2025-26 results.

Advice and information to employers demonstrates effective and efficient services to employers by responding to calls as they are received (live response) or in proximity. The OEA supports employers manage claims and account issues with WSIB as they occur, enabling small-mid sized businesses to focus their time and attention on business operations.

Representation cases demonstrate effective services offered to employers through specialized support during the detailed WSIB and WSIAT legal processes. Expert OEA staff review cases with clients to chart an appeal path that is most suited for the individual business.

During 2026-29 we will continue to raise awareness of our services.

Performance measures:

- Webinar series, offer 1-2 series per fiscal year
- Content developed for clients and stakeholders
 - Post new content bi-weekly, on average, on social media
 - E-bulletin one (1) or more times per year

OEA staff are expert, client focused and inclusive:

- Training sessions for LSO licensed staff to meet Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements set by the LSO

The OEA is an effective, valued system partner. We contribute to an accessible system and system improvement through expertise and strong relationships with stakeholders and system partners.

- Stakeholder and system partner meetings, process and policy consultations
- Presentation requests and collaboration

Statistics

Advice Provided to Employers

2025-26	2024-25	Status
1,132	1,310	Slightly under target

- Advice calls with employers often include several topics during a phone call and/or email.
- Advice provided was affected by the WSIB labour disruption
- Webinar presentations contribute to advice to employers because attendee questions are referred to local expert Specialists as a 'meet and greet' opportunity while offering individualized advice.

Representation Cases Opened and Closed

	2025-26	2024-25	Status
Cases Opened	157	177	Slightly under target
Cases Closed	171	167	At target

- Representation cases opened and closed this fiscal year were affected by the labour disruption at WSIB

OHSA Reprisals

Lean process changes are planned for this fiscal period to deliver better services to employers by providing information earlier, similar to the approach in the workplace safety and insurance process. From April 1 to December 16, 2025, there were 18 advice calls opened and five (5) cases.

Webinar attendance

	2025-26	Status
	2 series presented	Met target
Attendance	4,409	

- Presented by the agency's expert, specialized staff.
- Showcase the team's expertise, meet the education mandate and provide an opportunity to meet employers.
- Support advice numbers through 1-1 response to employer questions

Client Feedback

The agency invites client feedback through email surveys for advice and cases at the time of closure. For the advice team, 95% of clients would recommend the agency to another employer. For the representation team, all employers who responded (100%) would recommend our services to other employers.

Survey data is also collected after the webinars. Asked to measure the December 2025 Appeals Process Refresher webinar on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 as the highest, the team received scores of 4 (52%) and 5 (48%).

Communication Plan

The OEA's communications raise awareness of employer responsibilities and changes within the workplace safety and insurance system.

To reach as many employers as possible, the OEA posts on social media (LinkedIn, X - formerly Twitter), presents webinars, sends newsletters, partners with health and safety associations and attends regional events.

The agency's following on LinkedIn has grown steadily in 2025-26 with an increase of 35% to 357 followers as of December 12, 2025; in the same time frame, the agency has posted content 64 times, including webinar notices. The agency has 2,460 followers on X (formerly Twitter) and posted 56 items.

Webinars are a cost-effective component of the OEA's education and information sharing strategy. Updating content to attract registration and attendance will be ongoing.

The agency plans to continue to attend the Partners in Prevention regional conferences in 2026-27 as a trade show exhibitor. Participating in this occupational health and safety community raises our profile, resulting in local speaking engagements, opportunities to connect with system partners, individual employers, and health and safety professionals. We will also explore other trade show exhibit opportunities.

The agency seeks client feedback through e-surveys following advice and case closure. The agency welcomes qualitative feedback from clients as an indicator of value provided to employers and stakeholders.

The agency measures the effectiveness of its communications through the number of registrants and attendees for agency webinar sessions, presentations offered to the community and statistics for employer advice and information.

Successful outreach is appreciated by employers newly aware of the agency's pre-paid services, made possible through the employers' WSIB premiums and administrative fees.

Stakeholder and System Partner Engagement

The Office of the Employer Adviser is an effective, valued partner in the workplace safety and insurance system. The agency contributes to system improvement through relationships with stakeholders, the WSIB, the WSIAT, and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD). The agency collaborates with health and safety associations for presentations to employers, for example, in 2025-26 there were regional engagements with Workplace Safety Prevention Services (WSPS) and tradeshow exhibits at the Partners In Prevention conferences. The OEA participates in system consultations, in this fiscal year, the OEA shared feedback with the Tribunal about proposed changes to Practice Directions and plans to file a submission in the WSIB Noise Induced Hearing Loss consultation. The OEA team organizes and attends training sessions to ensure we can support smaller employers and stakeholders adapt to changes to the appeals system.

For s. 50 reprisal matters, the agency meets with interested employer groups and attends OLRB stakeholder sessions as scheduled. Details of our section 50 mandate are included in all OEA introductory presentations to employer groups.

Through our work with individual employers, education and outreach work we contribute to an accessible workplace safety and insurance system.

Resources to Meet Goals and Objectives

The OEA annual budget is \$4,219,000. The agency may face budget pressures as new collective agreements are negotiated with its represented workforce's bargaining agents (i.e. potential increase in salary and benefit costs), as well as to address retirement costs when they occur. The OEA's work with digital tools during these fiscal years will inform the resources needed to raise awareness of services, modernize case management functionality and deliver better services for small business employers.

Funding for the OEA is a legislated obligation of the WSIB under the WSIA and the office operates within the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development as part of the Ontario government's fiscal and human resource structures and the *Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006* (PSOA). This funding model means that the agency's legal services and education sessions are pre-paid; no fee is charged to employers at the time of advice and representation.

The OEA staffing complement is 28.0 full time equivalent (FTE) positions.

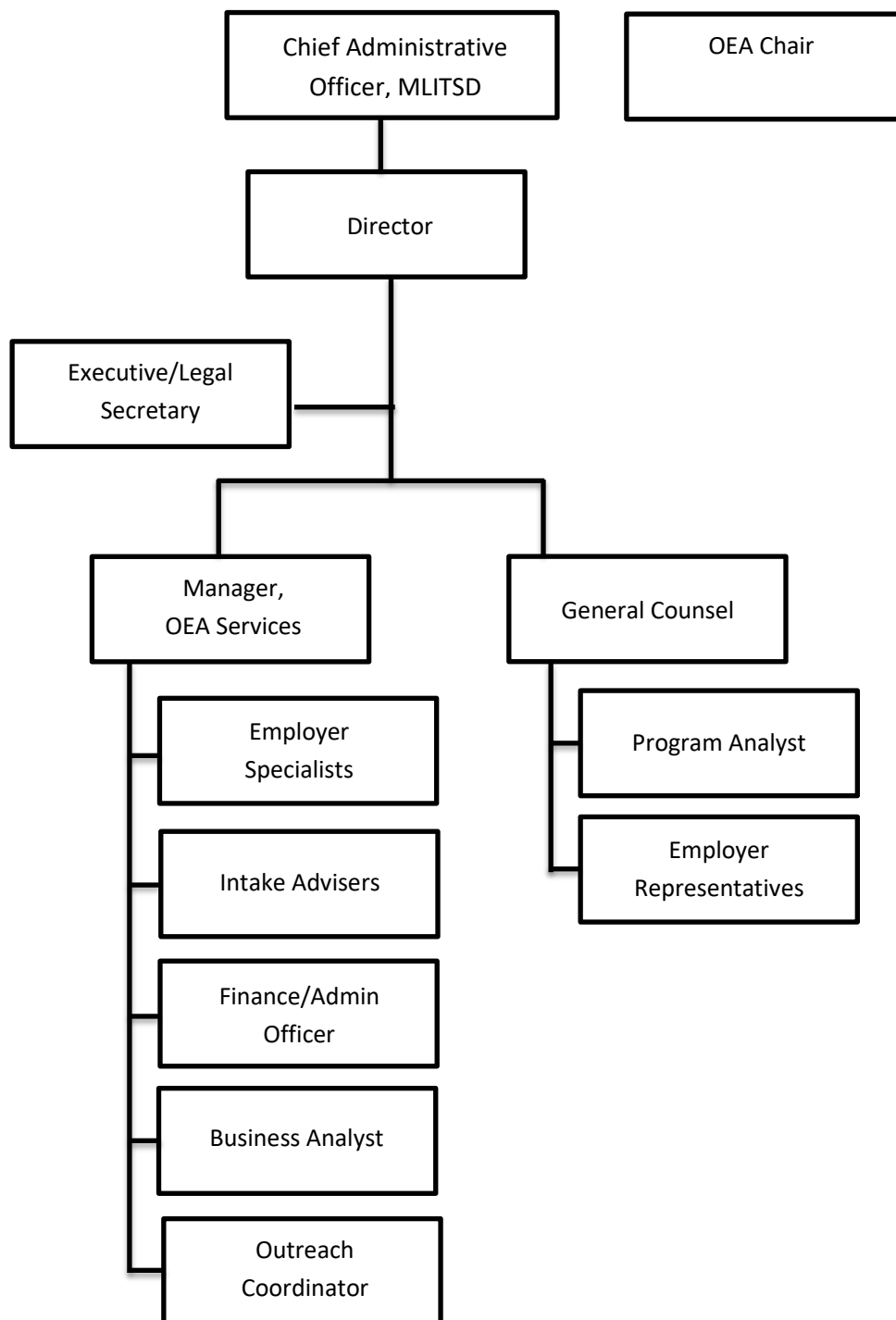
Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The agency does not have cases of artificial intelligence (AI) use to report at this time.

Appendix A: Financial Resources

Standard Account	2026-27 Preliminary Planning Base	2027-28 Preliminary Planning Base	2028-29 Preliminary Planning Base
Salaries & Wages	2,953,400	2,953,400	2,953,400
Benefits	734,200	734,200	734,200
Total SWB	3,687,600	3,687,600	3,687,600
ODOE: Transportation & Communication	148,700	148,700	148,700
Services	292,900	292,900	292,900
Supplies & Equipment	89,800	89,800	89,800
Total ODOE	531,400	531,400	531,400
Grand Total	4,219,000	4,219,000	4,219,000

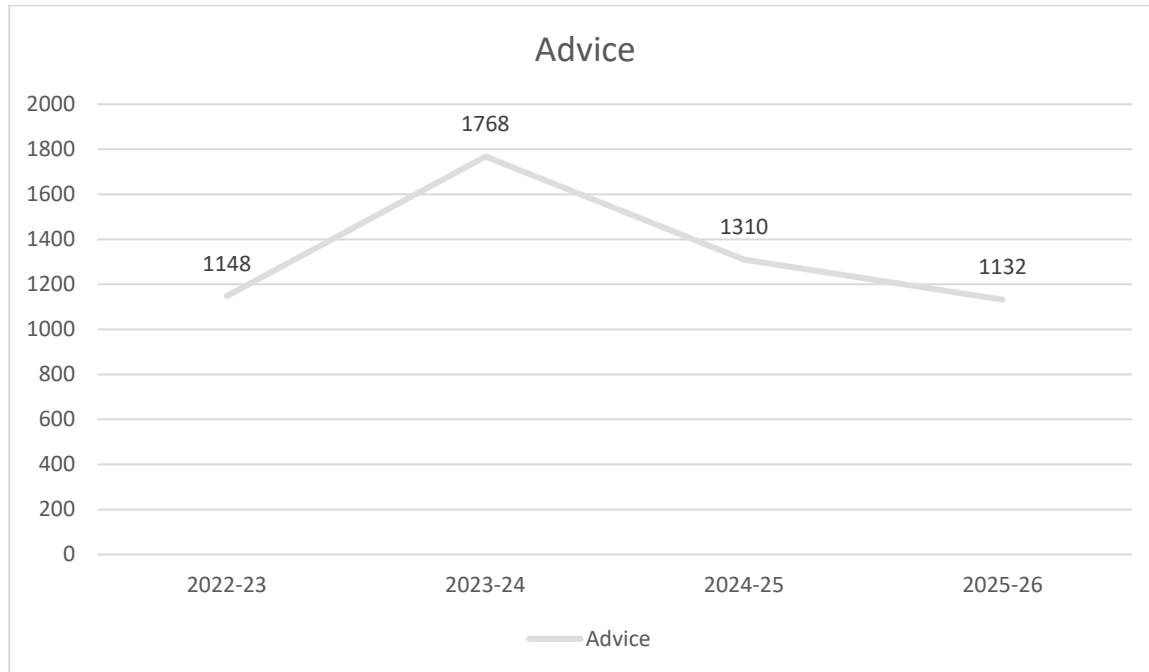
Appendix B: Organization Structure



Appendix C: Performance Measures

Key Activity: Advice and Representation Services

Performance Measure 2026-27– Advice provided to employers



Agency Contribution

- The OEA provides advice and information to employers about their workplace safety and insurance questions and issues; and supports employers with their questions about s. 50 OHSA reprisal matters.
- The OEA Advice Centre is the key initial contact. This Team supports employers as they navigate WSIB claims and account issues and is also a referral function for the agency's representation services. Representation staff also provide advice.
- Employers access services through phone, email, or website contact page.

What does the graph show?

- Agency advice statistics capture the different topics raised by clients during interactions to track the key issues to employers.
- Advice numbers were supported by strong interest in the Fall 2023 webinar series. Individual questions received during webinars were referred to representation staff for individual, fact specific advice.

2026-27 Commitments

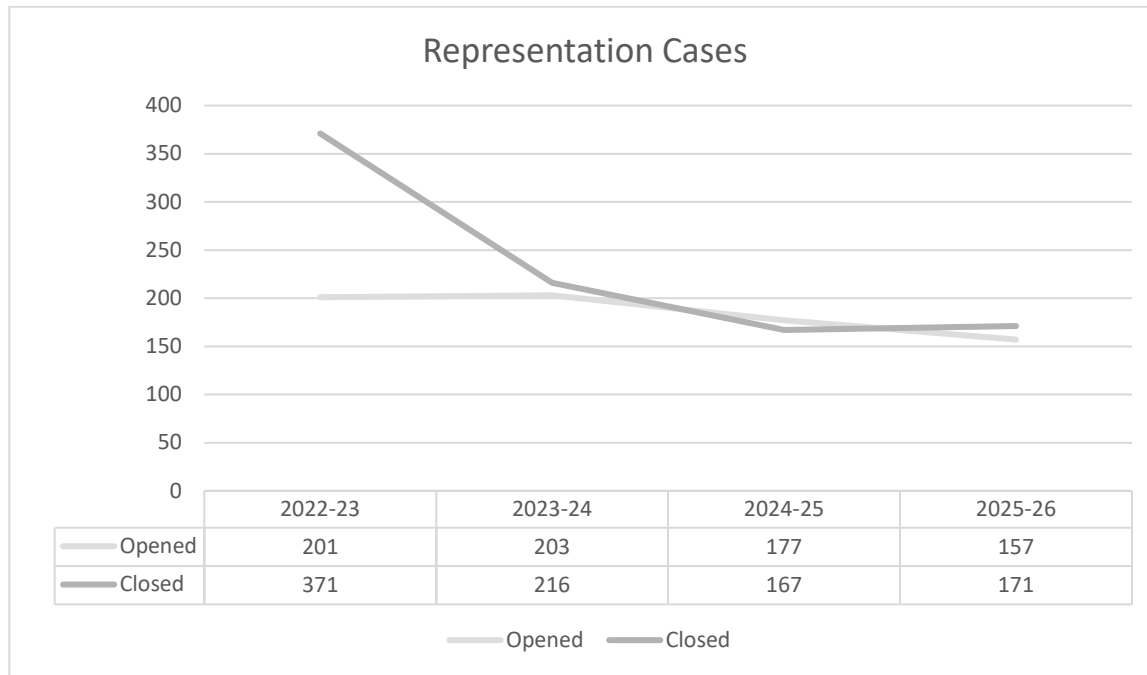
- Our goal is to increase advice services by 10% during the 3-year period of 2026-29 compared to fiscal year 2025-26.

Long-term Target

- The long-term target is to return to pre-pandemic advice numbers
- This is an existing measure.

Key Activity: Advice and Representation Services

Performance Measure for 2026-27 – Opened and Closed Cases



Agency contribution

- The agency's specialist staff provide representation for employers before the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal and the Ontario Labour Relations Board.
- Employers value the services in specialized areas of law; the office's services are pre-paid through WSIB premiums and administrative fees and enable business owners to focus their time and energy on their business.

What Does the Graph Show?

- Incoming representation cases have decreased.
- The OEA continued to serve clients by resolving cases before the WSIB, WSIAT and OLRB.
- The agency aims to convert advice, webinars session questions, and contacts made during presentations into future services to Ontario employers.
- Note: Case timelines from open to closed varies based on issues and appeals.

2026-27 Commitment

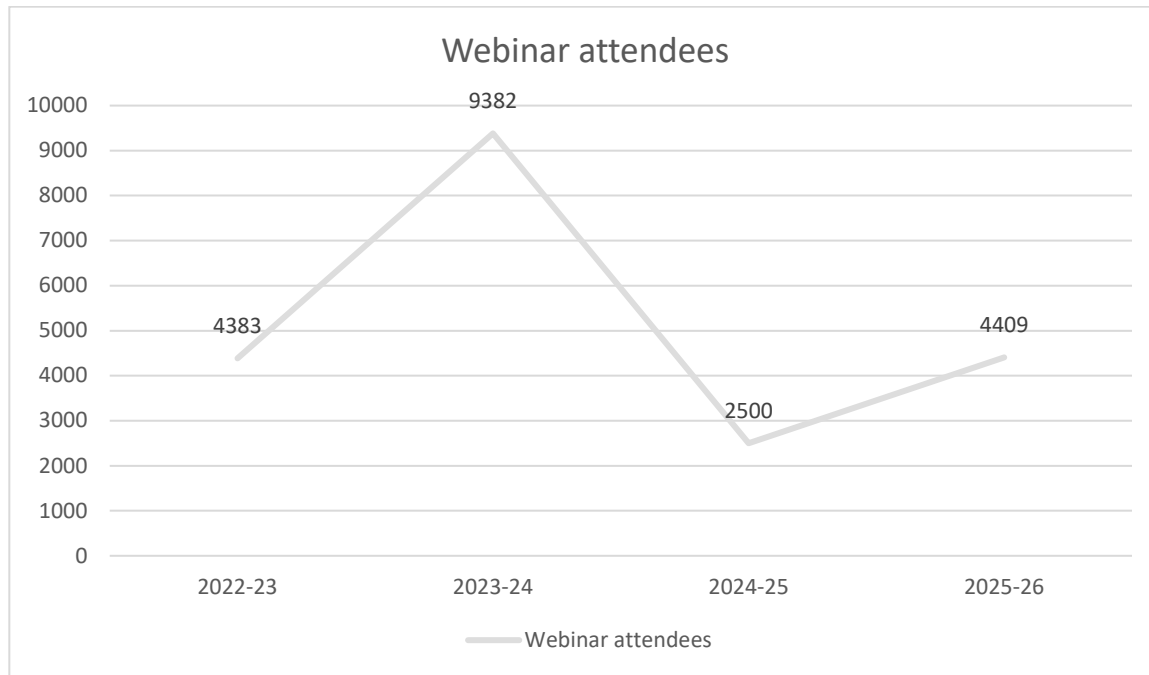
- Our goal is to increase opened representation cases by 10% during the 3-year period of 2026-29 compared to fiscal year 2025-26.

Long-term target

- The long-term target is to return to pre-pandemic representation numbers.
- This is an existing measure.

Key activity: Education and Information to Employers

Performance Measure 2026-27: Offer 10 webinars



Agency Contribution

- The OEA is a key source of learning and information for employers about WSIB matters, from claims issues to registration and premium rates.
- The agency developed and presented a series of webinars to share information with employers, raise awareness of responsibilities and draw attention to OEA service
- Sessions are presented by the agency's expert, specialized staff.

What does the graph show?

- Webinar sessions were a successful approach to raise awareness of services.

2026-27 Commitments

- The commitment for 2026-27 is to offer 10 webinars.

Long-term Target

- The long-term target is to present webinars approximately one per month. Content development work in response to feedback will require periodic adjustments to the schedule.
- This is an existing measure.