

# JOB NOT DONE

## WHY ONTARIO WORKERS NEED A MANDATORY TRAINING STANDARD FOR WORKPLACE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INFORMATION SYSTEM (WHMIS) NOW

### THE PROMISE

- Ontario government committed to implementing [46 recommendations](#) made by an Expert Panel's year-long review of province's occupational health and safety system in 2010.
- Expert Panel Recommendation 2: **The new prevention organization should create, implement and audit training standards that would apply to training required by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act [OHSA] and regulations.***

### THE IMPORTANCE

- Introduced in 1988, WHMIS was hailed as fundamental to the worker right to know about hazardous workplace materials.
- Under Ontario law, employers must provide workers with general and workplace-specific WHMIS training which:
  - results in workers being able to use information to protect their health and safety [WHMIS, 7(3)]
  - is reviewed at least annually, developed and implemented in consultation with joint health and safety committee or worker H&S rep
  - includes all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of workers [OHSA, 42(2),(3)].

Research and experience show:

- Research literature consistently points to underreporting of occupational disease caused by hazardous work exposures by as much as 70 per cent.
- Still, accepted death claims for [work-related cancers](#) outnumber those from traumatic incidents.
- A [blueprint](#) for controlling work-related cancers in Ontario supports a WHMIS training standard.
- [Workplace training research](#) finds workers report the WHMIS training they received as 'bad training', and not specific to their work.

### PROGRESS STALLED

- When WHMIS became law, many workers had access to quality training.
- Since, in many Ontario workplaces WHMIS training has been reduced to watching a video or reading online content.
- The Expert Panel Report recommended where the OHSA and regs set training requirements there should be training standards in place to ensure the consistent quality of the training.
- Despite WHMIS being the most broadly used training requirement, no work was started to create an enforceable WHMIS training standard.

# WHMIS STANDARD NOW. HOW YOU CAN HELP

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## WORKERS CAN:

- Take inventory of the substances you work with and see if they come with Safety Data Sheets. If not, report it
- Think back—do you remember anything about your WHMIS training?
- Refuse to touch a chemical or substance without WHMIS training
- Ask your supervisor for regular WHMIS training and refreshers
- Support efforts at work to seek robust and regular WHMIS training
- File or sign on to a group grievance if necessary

## COMMITTEE/HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES CAN:

- Request to see the records of all WHMIS training
- On every monthly inspection, talk to workers and identify all substances they work with and go and check for current Safety Data Sheets, labelling, and training compliance
- Enlist the support of workers and union reps about the need for robust and regular WHMIS training
- Write a recommendation for a formal WHMIS training program and refreshers. Use your statutory rights to be consulted about training to insert yourself into discussions about workplace training programs
- Ensure that the Health and Safety Policy mandates systemic review of development, maintenance, and review of the WHMIS training program as well as training records
- Report to the union and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development any identified gaps or deficiencies in the workplace WHMIS training program

## UNIONS CAN:

- Build worker support for efforts to get a rigorous WHMIS training program
- Create strong links, communications, and interactions between workers, union, and H&S reps
- Post flyers on union boards/share at local meetings/newsletters, write articles on the value of WHMIS training
- Negotiate with employer and provide rationale for a workplace WHMIS training standard
- File union and group grievances if necessary
- Join with other unions at area council/labour councils to call for mandatory WHMIS training standards

**JOIN THE  
MOVEMENT:  
JOB NOT DONE**

Do you work  
with chemicals  
and hazardous  
substances?

Do you have a  
WHMIS story?

Why is training  
important?

