



OFFICE OF THE WORKER ADVISER

Annual Report

April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

www.owa.gov.on.ca

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
THE MANDATE OF THE OFFICE OF THE WORKER ADVISER.....	4
WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE PROGRAM	4
Overview of Services.....	4
Information, Advice and Representation	4
Key Highlights and Examples of OWA Casework for 2023-2024.....	5
OUTREACH AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	7
SERVICE DELIVERY ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES	9
Advisory Services and Case Review.....	10
Decisions obtained for OWA Clients	13
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRISALS PROGRAM	17
OHSRP Performance	17
Staff Engagement and Development	19
APPENDIX A – FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024.....	I
APPENDIX B – OWA OFFICE LOCATIONS	II

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of the Worker Adviser (OWA) has made significant strides in enhancing service delivery and supporting injured workers and their families. This report covers the period from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, highlighting key achievements in reducing wait times, expanding outreach, launching the Workplace Insurance and Safety Hub (WISH), addressing occupational disease cases, and developing new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to strengthen self-accountability and ensure continuous improvement. Key achievements include:

- OWA successfully reduced the average wait time for case reviews from approximately eight months to five months, a nearly 40% improvement. This reduction reflects our commitment to providing timely service to our clients.
- We strengthened stakeholder relationships and significantly expanded our outreach efforts, targeting Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP) offices and community organizations. This included sending numerous invitation letters and hosting multiple webinars to engage participants and share information about our services.
- Launched the new Case Management System to streamline case management and improve data collection and reporting. This new system consolidated legacy case management systems and introduced efficiencies that benefit both staff and clients. A second release during 2024-25 will introduce a client portal, enabling secure electronic communication and document sharing.
- We renewed our focus on occupational disease cases by strengthening partnerships with system partners, building staff capacity, and enhancing tracking of progress. Our efforts included managing numerous cases resulting in substantial compensation and continued advocacy for affected workers.
- We developed a set of quantifiable measurements used to gauge the agency's overall long-term operational performance. These new KPIs will help ensure continuous improvement by tracking progress, identifying areas for enhancement, and strengthening our self-accountability. This initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to deliver the highest quality service to our clients.

Looking ahead, the OWA will continue to focus on modernizing processes, enhancing service delivery through digital transformation, and addressing the evolving needs of workers. Our strategic priorities include further reducing wait times, improving client satisfaction, and expanding outreach efforts to ensure all workers are aware of their rights and the services available to them.

The past year has been marked by significant achievements and progress towards our strategic goals. The OWA remains dedicated to providing high-quality services to workers and their families, advocating for their rights, and ensuring fair and just outcomes. We extend our gratitude to our dedicated staff, partners, and stakeholders for their continued support and collaboration.

THE MANDATE OF THE OFFICE OF THE WORKER ADVISER

The Office of the Worker Adviser (OWA) provides education, advice and legal representation to non-unionized workers and their survivors in workplace insurance matters (also known as workers' compensation), as well as to non-unionized workers of employers with fewer than 100 employees in respect of reprisals by their employers within the meaning of Part VI of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA).

OWA is a non-Board governed agency of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) and is a key part of the workplace insurance system. Along with other system partners, including the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal (WSIAT), the OWA supports the government's goal to advance the purposes of the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* (WSIA) and to support workers in the context of reprisals by their employers. The OWA aids workers through dispute resolution, enabling clients to access benefits and services.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE PROGRAM

Overview of Services

The OWA focuses on providing the following services to non-unionized injured workers and their survivors, related to workplace safety and insurance matters:

- Information and advice;
- Educational services; and
- Representation in dispute resolution and appeals before the WSIB and WSIAT.

In addition to serving individual clients, the OWA also seeks to work with system and community partners to help ensure that the system is responsive to the needs of all injured workers and survivors and that appropriate referrals are made among the partners.

Information, Advice and Representation

Workers contact the OWA with questions about the workplace insurance regime or for help understanding their entitlements under the WSIA. The agency provides information, legal advice, and, where applicable, referrals to other government programs or services. Additionally, the OWA provides self-help information for workers to handle their own claims when appropriate. We serve a wide range of clients with various matters related to workplace insurance.

The OWA represents workers who may have a reasonable chance of success with their appeals on denied claims at the WSIB and the WSIAT. Our expertise and efforts to support those with injuries and occupational diseases are of deep importance to vulnerable workers, their families, and the communities in which they live.

Key Highlights and Examples of OWA Casework for 2023-2024

General Casework

The OWA represents hundreds of workers each year, significantly impacting the lives of injured workers and their families. Each successful case aids the individual worker and their families but may also establish important principles to guide future decisions, improving adjudication of future appeals and enhancing the overall system.

The OWA is funded by the WSIB. The OWA does not charge fees for its services.

The following are some notable WSIAT cases from 2023-2024 that illustrate OWA's contribution to fair and high-quality decision-making, showcasing the breadth of issues our advisers handled:

- **Agent Orange Exposure:** A worker's exposure to Agent Orange was determined to have significantly contributed to his development of an autoimmune disorder. Despite the rarity of the disease, it was found that the chemical exposure was a significant contributing factor in causing the condition in a genetically predisposed individual.
- **Spinal Injury Award:** It was affirmed that pre-existing, asymptomatic degenerative changes in the spine should not be excluded from a Non-Economic Loss (NEL) award for a cervical spine injury.
- **Psychotraumatic Disability:** The Tribunal overturned a decision denying secondary entitlement for psychotraumatic disability. The panel found that, although the worker experienced non-compensable stressors, the work-related factors were a significant contributing factor in the worker's condition.
- **Pancreatic Cancer Entitlement:** The worker's estate was granted entitlement for pancreatic cancer. It was concluded that the worker's exposure to multiple carcinogens at work significantly contributed to the development of the disease, alongside smoking, another known cause.
- **Work Transition Plan:** A worker was found to be in an unsuitable Selected Occupation (SO) in logistics because they could not complete the work transition plan, which included securing an internship. The worker was granted full Loss of Earnings (LOE) benefits until age 65, five years post-injury.
- **Traumatic Mental Stress:** A worker was granted a 12-year extension to file a claim for benefits and entitlement for traumatic mental stress. The worker, an underground miner, witnessed a fatal cave-in and filed a claim years later due to depression. The extension was granted.
- **Voluntary Underemployment:** In a reconsideration, it was determined that a worker, a single mother who moved to a small town for family support, was not voluntarily underemployed. She completed a diploma in social work, and a new hearing was ordered, recognizing that the original decision failed to consider her personal circumstances.

These cases exemplify the OWA's role in supporting fair and consistent outcomes for workers, contributing to a more equitable system for all.

Occupational Disease

The identification and compensation of occupational diseases continue to be a challenge. These diseases often take years to manifest, and by the time they do, the workplaces and local unions related to them have frequently ceased operations. The OWA plays a vital role in representing workers who suffer from occupational diseases and their survivors. These are complex cases involving scientific, medical, and exposure information, often linked to clusters due to employment in the same workplaces or industries.

McIntyre Powder - Northern Ontario

From the 1940s to the 1970s, hard rock miners in northern Ontario were required to inhale aluminum dust, known as "McIntyre Powder," believed to protect against silica's health impacts. This practice ended in 1979 due to lack of supporting evidence and concerns over neurological health effects. In 2022, Parkinson's disease was officially recognized as an occupational disease linked to McIntyre Powder and codified for presumptive entitlement in Schedule 3 of the General Regulation made under the WSIA. The WSIB reconsidered previously denied claims in accordance with the presumption.

2023-2024 Highlights:

- Seven decisions granted entitlements for lung cancer, COPD, mixed dust pneumoconiosis, and Alzheimer's with Parkinsonian features, providing Non-Economic Loss benefits, survivor benefits, Independent Living Allowance, Funeral Expenses, and interest. One estate received nearly \$400,000.

Peterborough Occupational Disease Cluster

The General Electric (GE) Peterborough facility was in operation for 126 years. It housed production of small to massive electric motors and generator manufacturing, electrical components, and a nuclear facility on a 21-acre worksite that involved exposure to over 3,000 chemicals. The multiplicity of carcinogens and other toxic chemical exposures resulted in numerous occupational diseases. For over a decade, the OWA has partnered with WSIB, OHCOW, UNIFOR, WSIAT, retirees, and community groups to address over 800 cases from a Peterborough factory.

2023-2024 Highlights:

- Successfully resolved and closed multiple files, with three appeals resulting in over \$370,000 in compensation for clients.
- Built staff capacity by providing specialized training on occupational disease and established a community of practice that meets regularly to support the adjudication of these cases.

Sarnia Occupational Disease Cluster – Owens Corning

The OWA made significant progress in representing workers and their survivors affected by occupational diseases from a now-closed factory in Sarnia.

2023-2024 Highlights:

- Successfully made final legal submissions for lung and hypopharynx cancer appeals.
- Achieved nine decisions, including three lung cancer claims granted. Additional decisions included allowances for lung cancer, COPD, AML, and other cases.
- Secured approximately \$5.5 million in awards, with ongoing support for clients through the adjudication process and benefit payments.

Rubber Workers – Kitchener/Waterloo

The OWA continues to represent Rubber Workers in OWA's Southwest region, with cases originating from a systematic WSIB review and ongoing OHCOW clinic referrals.

2023-2024 Highlights:

- The OWA received three positive decisions, with awards totaling nearly \$2 million.

These highlights reflect the OWA's continued commitment to supporting workers and their families, ensuring they receive the benefits and recognition they deserve for their occupational injuries and diseases.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Injured Workers and the General Public

We meet by phone or in person with workers about their claims or cases and promote [our website](http://www.owa.gov.on.ca) as a source of information¹. The OWA also provides educational services to injured workers and the public through information sessions held in communities across the province. Outreach plays an integral role in strengthening our stakeholder relationships and building awareness of our professional legal services.

Our goal this fiscal year was to reconnect with the public and share important information about the work and mandate of the OWA. This year's outreach efforts targeted Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP) offices and community organizations representing workers in Ontario. This year's outreach activities included:

- **155 Letters** sent to MPP offices and community organizations, sharing information about the OWA and inviting them to our webinars.
- **65 Organizations Contacted by Telephone** as part of our outreach initiative.
- **Six Outreach Webinars** hosted approximately 110 attendees in total.

Additionally, the OWA initiated creation of social media accounts to further expand our outreach efforts to online audiences.

¹ <http://www.owa.gov.on.ca>

Community and System Partners

Across the province, the OWA works with many local partners to ensure good service and mutually beneficial referrals. This includes local WSIB offices, health care providers and social service agencies. The OWA also participates in partnerships at the provincial level.

- **WSIB Labour and Injured Worker Advisory Committee (LIWAC):** The OWA regularly attends LIWAC meetings, an advisory committee drawn from the worker community and convened by the Chair of the WSIB. In this forum, labour representatives and the OWA provide constructive feedback and play a key role in shaping and developing the practical administrative and operational policies necessary to deliver a sustainable workplace health and safety system for the future.
- **Fatalities and Immediate Response (FAIR) Partnership:** The OWA continues its important commitment to the FAIR Partnership between the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD), Threads of Life, and the Office of the Worker Adviser (OWA). Through coordinated efforts, the FAIR Partnership aims to provide comprehensive and timely responses to the individual needs of families and injured workers following a traumatic workplace fatality, and to workers and their families suffering from catastrophic workplace injuries resulting in severe and permanent life-altering physical impairments.
- **Occupational Disease Claims:** In our work related to occupational disease claims, we maintain a key collaboration with the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW). OHCOW produces exposure assessments that are essential for making submissions on behalf of workers and families in these complex claims. The OWA continues to advance and modernize access to the benefits of this partnership.

Through these efforts, the OWA raises awareness about our services and positions itself as an effective contributor to the workplace safety and insurance community, ensuring better outcomes for workers and their families.

WSIB and WSIAT Consultations

In 2023-2024, the OWA provided submissions in three formal consultations by the WSIB and WSIAT with respect to proposed changes to their adjudicative practices and procedures. Detailed submissions were provided on draft changes to the WSIB Appeals Services Division's *Practices and Procedures* manual. An updated manual incorporating some stakeholder feedback was issued by the WSIB. Additional submissions were made with respect to proposed changes to the WSIB's dispute resolution and appeals processes arising from a value for money audit of that program.

As a member of WSIAT's Stakeholder Advisory Group, the OWA participated in consultations regarding major changes to the tribunal's pre-hearing process. Comprehensive written submissions on draft practice directions and forms were provided to WSIAT and the OWA continued to work closely with WSIAT on transition issues throughout the year.

SERVICE DELIVERY ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES

OWA is taking steps to modernize service delivery with the goal to improve responsiveness and quality. These include:

- The use of technology to enhance service delivery;
- Provision of summary advice at early stages of a client's journey to assist clients with managing their claims and reduce the number of clients on the waitlist;
- Improving service timelines by reducing our list of cases waiting for review; and
- Investing in expert, knowledgeable staff through an in-house training program.

New Case Management System

In December 2023, the OWA launched the Workplace Insurance and Safety Hub (WISH), our new case management system following a two-year procurement and project period. This modernization project consolidated multiple document storage systems and migrated legacy records from the former case management system and file tracking data from the Occupational Health and Safety Reprisals program.

Both OWA program mandates are now managed through WISH which will:

- Improve data quality and electronic record management to save time and reduce errors;
- Enhance data collection and reporting to better inform decision-making;
- Automate archiving and retention to reduce costs and time spent manually performing this function; and
- Adapt to any changes from the WSIB and the WSIAT.

A second release in March 2024 introduced additional efficiencies, capabilities, and a client portal will be deployed during fiscal year 2024-2025. The client portal will allow new and existing clients to make requests for service or inquiries and securely share documents and messages electronically with the OWA. The client portal will be accessible through the OWA website and can be used on mobile devices.

Summary Advice

The OWA implemented a mandatory Summary Advice procedure to ensure clients receive necessary legal advice from a worker adviser at the initial stages of their appeal journey. The goal of this new procedure is to provide clients with essential information on actions they can take on their own, such as seeking medical reports from a physician, exploring alternative dispute resolution options, and gaining a better understanding of their claim and next steps. While the OWA cannot offer representation until our advisers have reviewed a claim file and assessed its reasonable chance of success, this approach allows us to manage client expectations while providing valuable information that can assist with earlier claim resolution.

Waiting for Case Review

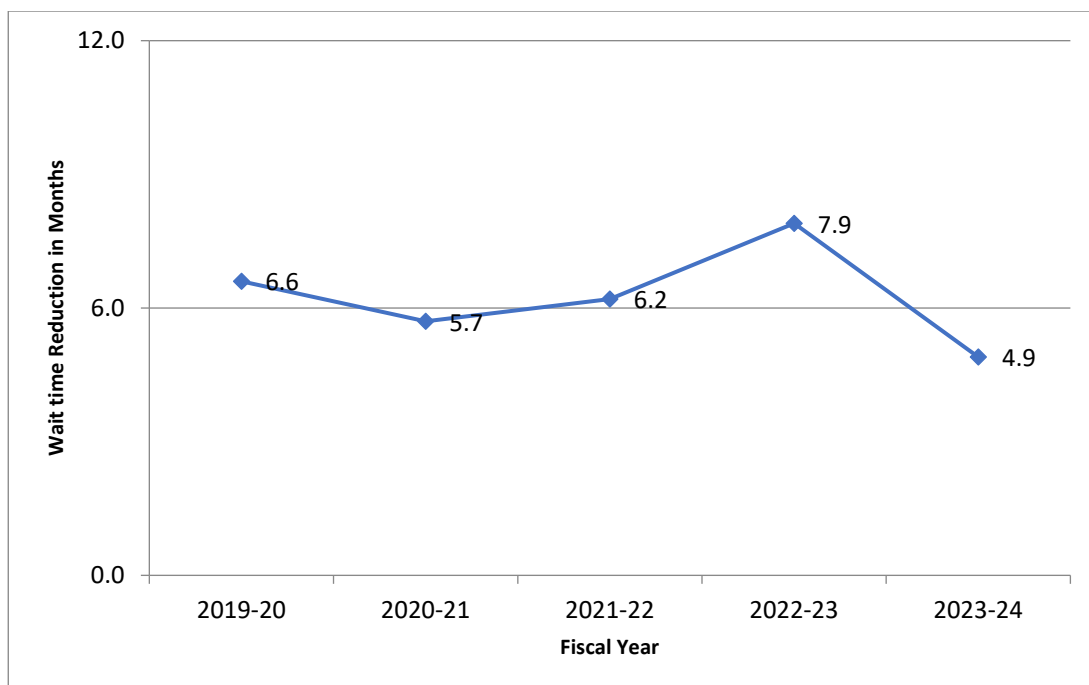
With a focus on quality client service, the OWA continued to mobilize internal resources to improve service delivery and decrease wait times for case reviews.

In the fiscal year 2023-2024, the average wait time for clients to receive an offer of review from the Office of the Worker Adviser (OWA), indicating the availability of a worker adviser to review their file, was 4.9 months. This marks a significant improvement of 37.97% compared to the fiscal year 2022-2023, when the average wait time was 7.9 months.

The number of files waiting for case review was also reduced over the previous year from 447 to 266, representing a reduction of 40.49% in the number of clients waiting for service. As part of ensuing accurate analysis of data, an audit of all cases on the wait list was conducted. The findings determined that 119 workers declined our services as they decided not to proceed, or they found a new representative. This is a decrease of 71% from the 203 of the previous fiscal year.

For perspective, an offer of review includes requesting consent from clients to access their WSIB claim file. Upon receiving the consent, the OWA submits a request through the WSIB E-Access system. Once the claim file is received, a worker adviser begins its review. The average wait time for file review to begin after receiving the client's claim file from WSIB was 6.6 months.

Figure 1: Wait Time

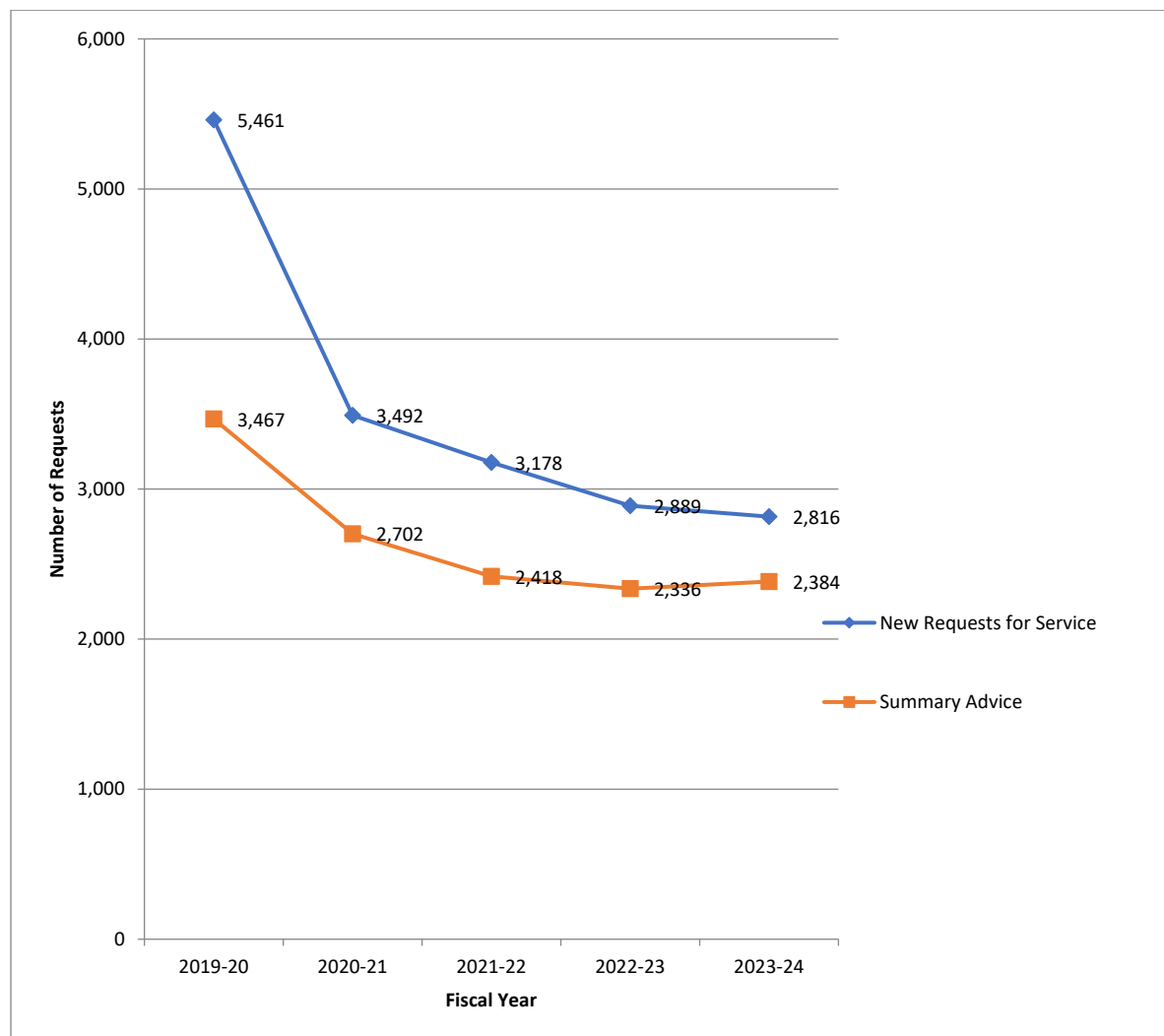


Advisory Services and Case Review

The table below shows the number of new requests for service involving both summary advice and requests for representation services during the past five years.

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the OWA had 2,816 new requests for service and 2,384 summary advice provided. This was a decrease of 3%, an increase of 2% respectively from 2022-2023.

Figure 2: New Requests for Service



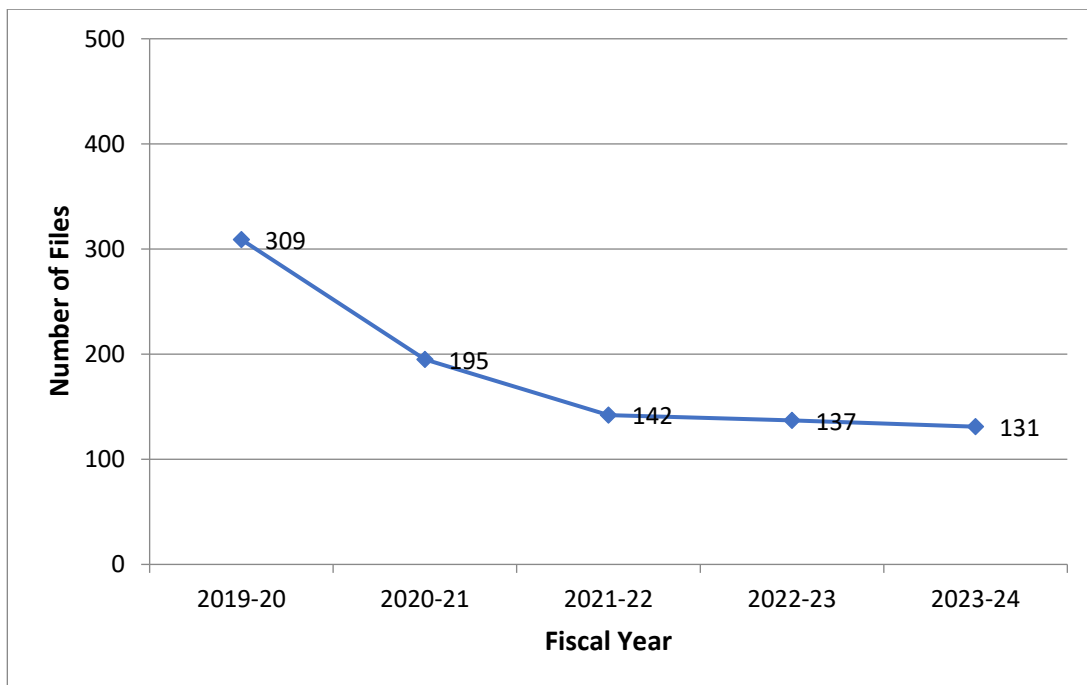
The data from 2020-2024 indicates a general decline in the number of new requests for service and consequently requests for representation. The trends suggest an evolving landscape in workplace insurance claims and the need for ongoing adaptation in the OWA's outreach and service strategies to meet these challenges effectively. Some key trends include:

- **Decline in New Requests for Service:** Over the past four years, the number of new requests for service has steadily declined; however, 2023-2024 saw a modest decline of 3% as compared to previous year. This trend may suggest a variety of factors, such as limited awareness about OWA services and historical wait times for OWA's representation services.

- The significant outreach efforts made in fiscal year 2023-2024 and a 40% reduction in average wait times are expected to bring more clients to the OWA in the coming years.

To avoid delay in dealing with priority cases, in 2023-2024 immediate case reviews were offered to 131 workers whose situations met the criteria for case prioritization. This is a decrease of 5% from 2022-2023. The current number of priority cases has remained consistent over the last few fiscal years.

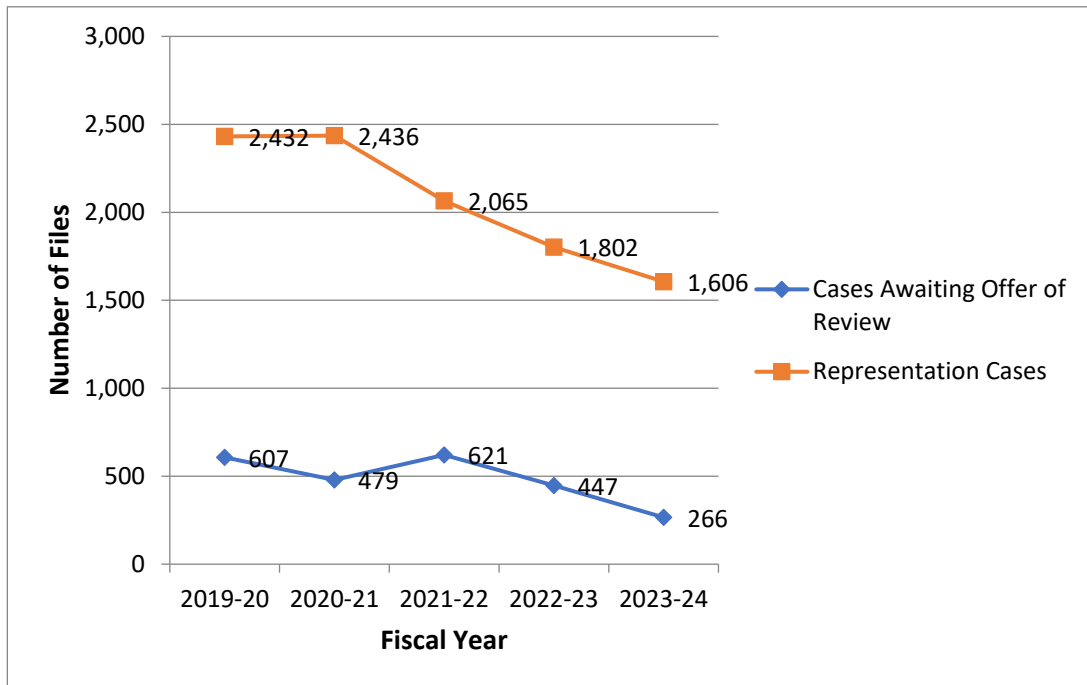
Figure 3: Number of Priority Cases



Case Inventory

The figure below shows the evolution and to reduce the total case inventory over the past five years. For each year, the line graph compares the total of cases awaiting case review and the agency's representation caseload.

Figure 4: Total Case Inventory



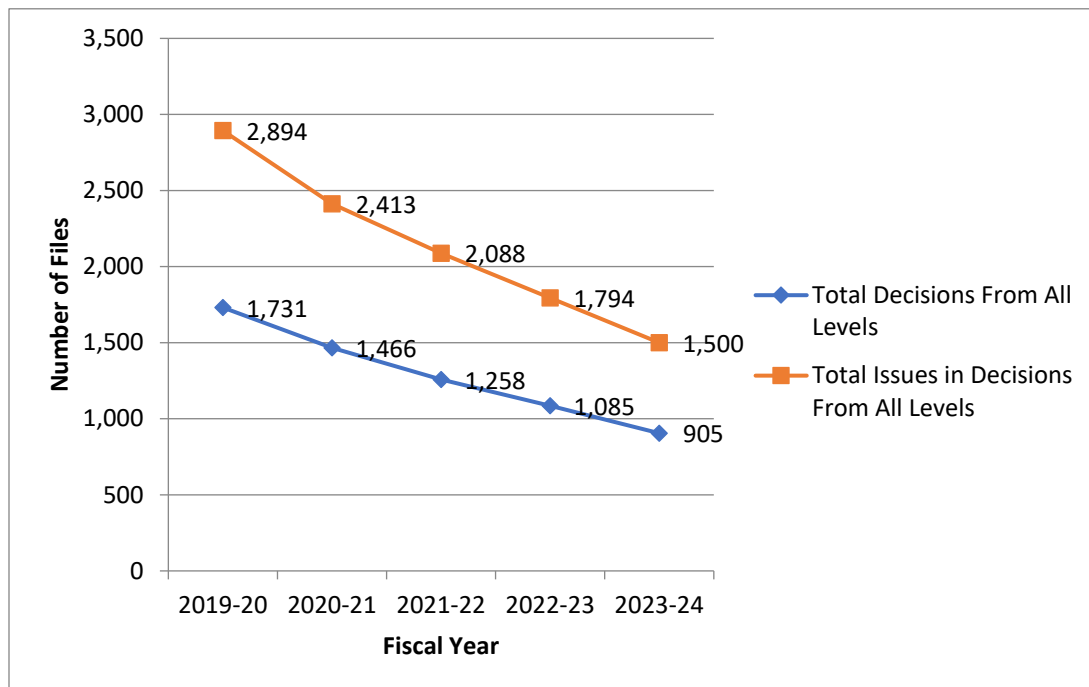
Decisions obtained for OWA Clients

The OWA provides support for early and safe return to work and for early resolution of disputes without recourse to formal hearings, both by diverting cases from the appeals system and by alternative dispute resolution at the appeals level. In 2023-2024, the OWA achieved its commitment by resolving 77% of disputes without a hearing.

2023-2024 Highlights:

- The total number of decisions from all levels decreased by 17%, from 1,085 in 2022-2023 to 905 in 2023-2024.
- The total number of issues in decisions from all levels decreased by 16%, from 1,794 in 2022-2023 to 1,500 in 2023-2024.

Figure 5: Total Decisions and Total Issues in Decision



While the success rate at the WSIB Appeal level increased, the success rates at the WSIB Operating Level and WSIAT decreased.

Decisions by Level of Appeal

The OWA represents clients through the appeals process. There are three levels of appeal within the workplace insurance system:

1. WSIB Operating Level
2. WSIB Appeals Level
3. WSIAT

There has been a consistent decrease in the number of decisions at all levels where the OWA was the representative over the years, with the most significant drop at the WSIAT level (28% decrease from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024).

WSIB Operating Level: The percentage of issues allowed at the Operating Level has decreased steadily, indicating a possible trend of stricter criteria or fewer cases meeting the criteria.

WSIB Appeals Level: The Appeals Branch has seen an increase in the percentage of issues allowed, suggesting higher success rates at the appeal level.

WSIAT: The WSIAT has a fluctuating allowance percentage, with a notable drop in the most recent year.

Overall, the total number of decisions and issues has decreased, and the total percentage of issues allowed has also seen a decline in the most recent year. The

number of decisions is largely influenced by factors beyond OWA's control, including scheduling, case complexity, and the availability of evidence.

Despite these challenges, we are committed to moving more cases forward by increasing staff capacity and sharpening our focus on the timely resolution of cases.

Client Satisfaction Levels

The OWA takes pride in the quality of service it provides to clients. To support continuous improvement, clients are asked to complete satisfaction surveys at the conclusion of the OWA's representation service to them. Of the 204 (44% increase in response rate over 2022-2023) individuals who responded to the survey in 2023-2024, 87.2% were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the service they received.

Performance Measure Targets and Results

The OWA met most of its performance targets this year, but the declining number of new clients indicate areas for further improvement. The notable improvement in providing summary advice and referrals helping manage our waitlist aligns well with our program goals. This demonstrates exceptional performance and consistency in resolving these cases efficiently. Sustained high performance in the OHSA Reprisals Program is a highlight, showcasing effective dispute resolution processes. The following is a description of performance for each measure:

- **Early & Alternative Dispute Resolution (EDR/ADR):** Despite a decrease from 2022-23 to 2023-24, the EDR/ADR rate remains significantly above the 70% target, indicating strong performance in early dispute resolution. The success rate is influenced by case nature and party preferences, often beyond our control.
- **Request for Representation and Case Reviews:** Number of requests for representations decreased by 10% from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024, reflecting improvements in front end advice and information to clients. An 11% increase in number of case reviews for clients requesting representation was observed.
- **Summary Advice and Referrals:** Number of summary advice and referrals decreased by 7% from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024; however, their effectiveness is well demonstrated by reduction in our waitlist.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Satisfaction remained high at 87.2%, close to the 90% target, despite a significantly larger survey sample than previous years (45% increase in size). The small decline is within acceptable standards.
- **OHSA Reprisals Program:** The OHSA Reprisals Program has consistently exceeded the long-term target of 80%, with 100% of cases resolved through early and alternative dispute resolution for the past two years.

Performance Measure Targets and Results

	Long-Term Target	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Change from 2022-23 to 2023-24
Workplace Insurance Program						
Early & Alternative Dispute Resolution (EDR/ADR)	70%	90%	85%	85%	77%	-8%
Case Assessments and Representation	5,000	3,580	2,907	2,635	2,380	-10%
Providing Summary Advice and Referrals	10,000	6,622	6,976	6,328	5,907	-7%
Customer Satisfaction Rate	90%	98.1%	97.3%	90.0%	87.2%	-3%
OHSa Reprisals Program						
Percentage of Representation Cases Resolved Through Early & Alternative Dispute Resolution	80%	89.7%	90.9%	100%	100%	0%

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRISALS PROGRAM

Description of Services

The Occupational Health and Safety Reprisals Program (OHSRP) assists non-unionized workers who have been subject to reprisals by their employers for exercising their occupational health and safety rights, asking their employers to follow the OHSA, testifying in an OHSA-related hearing or providing information to an OHSA inspector or following an inspector's order.

The OWA contributes to the overall effectiveness of the health and safety system by helping workers exercise their important rights under the OHSA.

Services provided to workers include:

- Information and advice;
- Representation in complaints under s. 50 of the OHSA before the Ontario Labour Relations Board; and
- Educational services.

Services are delivered to workers across the province by program staff from the OWA's head office in Toronto. Most workers contact the program through its province-wide, toll-free phone number.

Advisory Services

Advisory services include summary advice and intake interviews. Summary advice provides workers with information about their rights and, for matters outside the OWA's mandate, a referral to another source of help. At an intake interview, workers receive a comprehensive telephone consultation with a worker representative. They receive legal advice and referrals and may be offered representation.

Representation Services

When representation services are provided, workers formally retain the OWA to act as their legal representative. Staff provide legal representation at all stages of a reprisal complaint to the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB), including:

- Drafting, preparing and filing an application to the OLRB;
- Representing workers during informal settlement discussions (early dispute resolution);
- Representing workers at formal mediation conducted by the OLRB; and
- Representing workers at hearings and or consultations before the OLRB.

OHSRP Performance

The significant increase in demand and service delivery showcases the program's growing importance and relevance in the current post-pandemic workplace environment. The high rate of same-day advice delivery underscores the program's commitment to providing timely and effective support to workers. Maintaining high client

satisfaction and efficient dispute resolution reflects the program's ability to address worker concerns effectively and streamline processes to benefit all parties involved. The following are some key measures demonstrating the program's performance.

Increased Demand and Service Delivery:

- **Surge in Service Requests:** The OHSRP experienced a 25% increase in demand, with 756 new requests, likely driven by the post-pandemic return to workplaces across the province.
- **Enhanced Summary Advice:** Provided summary advice to 534 workers, marking a 31% improvement over the previous year. Nearly half of these cases resulted in referrals to alternative sources, indicating ongoing uncertainty among workers about where to seek assistance.

Efficiency and Timely Support:

- **Rapid Response:** Maintained a focus on efficiency by ensuring most cases received information and advice on the same day the request was made.
- **Increased Intake Interviews:** Conducted 184 intake interviews, an 18% increase from the previous year, reflecting a rise in the number of workers receiving legal advice and information.

Client Satisfaction and Effective Resolutions:

- **High Satisfaction Rates:** Achieved 100% client satisfaction among representation clients, demonstrating the effectiveness and quality of the services provided.
- **Efficient Dispute Resolution:** Successfully resolved 100% of reprisal complaints without the need for formal hearings. The involvement of the OWA expedited resolutions and ensured efficient allocation of system resources to cases requiring formal adjudication.

Outreach and Education Activities

The program addresses workers' questions about health and safety reprisal complaints and offers educational resources on the OWA website, covering:

- What health and safety reprisals are
- How workers can enforce their rights
- How the OWA can help
- Other organizations that can assist

Additionally, the program staff collaborate with other partners in the system, for instance, the staff delivered a presentation new Occupational Health and Safety inspectors.

In 2023-2024, the OHSRP expanded its outreach to educate the public about health and safety reprisals and collaborated with system partners to improve communication and referrals within the occupational health and safety system. The program staff conducted two sessions with MPP constituency staff to explain the reprisal mandate, identify reprisals, and guide appropriate referrals to the OWA.

Staff Engagement and Development

Staff Learning Program

In 2023-2024, substantial resources were allocated to staff learning and development. OWA staff completed approximately 2,000 hours of training this year. These hours of training included:

- New Worker Adviser training.
- Ontario Bar Association conference held in May 2023.
- Occupational Disease Working Group sessions on the Use of Scientific Information for demonstrating trends, Salivary Gland Cancers, and an Update on Asbestos.
- Training made available from our system partners including: WSIAT stakeholder sessions on the use of medical information at hearings as well as on changes to the procedures at the Tribunal. The WSIB provided a dedicated training on their Permanent Impairment Program.

In addition, internally developed training included:

- New Worker Adviser training which was tailored to a smaller group of new Advisers and made effective use of replays of recorded sessions.
- To support the WISH system implementation, multiple training sessions were held throughout Q3 and into Q4 of 2023-2024. The training included two overview sessions, four sessions for Worker Advisers, two for CSRs, four drop-in sessions for questions and process reviews, two Q&A sessions, and three spotlight sessions on specific topics. Additionally, update sessions were provided to keep staff informed about system changes and updates.
- Staff were provided a substantially updated procedures manual and were provided with over nine hours of training on the new manual and the procedures.

Sixty-two per cent of OWA staff are licensed by the Law Society of Ontario, a key objective of our training is to meet 75% of their continuing professional development training hours through a combination of internally developed and delivered training and external training attended online. The creation of a training calendar helped to ensure that this objective was met.

Anti-Racism Committee

The OWA Anti-Racism Team (ART) implemented an action plan based on the ministry's Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) to measure progress on anti-racism initiatives. One of ART's key pillars is social inclusion, aiming to improve the sense of belonging and inclusion for Indigenous, Black, and Racialized employees.

In 2023-2024, ART hosted weekly lunch and learn sessions in honor of the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. These sessions covered topics such as membership,

belonging, and the Ribbon Skirt Movement. The team also organized quarterly lunch and learn sessions to promote social inclusion and advance the OWA's anti-racism efforts, with plans to continue these sessions into 2024-2025.

During Black History Month, ART hosted several events featuring engaging presentations and discussions, including a guest speaker who shared insights on reclaiming culture and identity through language. Additionally, ART members contributed to the ministry's informal advisory committee panel for Asian Heritage Month by assisting in event moderation.

Many of ART's events have successfully obtained LSO accreditation. ART continues to work on strengthening internal and external stakeholder relationships to provide resources and anti-racist education to OWA staff.

APPENDIX A – FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

Figures are in \$000.0						
STANDARD ACCOUNT	2023-24 Expenditure Estimates	2023-24 In-year Board Approvals	2023-24 Year-end Budget*	2023-24 Year-end Actuals**	Variance to Final Budget	% Variance
Salaries & Wages	8,370.6	648.7	9,019.3	8,238.9	780.4	8.7%
Benefits	1,883.7	-	1,883.7	2,111.6	(227.9)	-12.1%
Other Direct Operating Expenses (ODOE)						
Transportation & Communication	296.0	50.0	346.0	102.8	243.2	70.3%
Services (incl. Office Leases)	1,674.2	170.0	1,844.2	2,444.6	(600.4)	-32.6%
Supplies & Equipment	100.0	-	100.0	104.2	(4.2)	-4.2%
Total ODOE	2,070.2	220.0	2,290.2	2,651.6	(361.4)	-15.8%
Grand Total	12,324.5	868.7	13,193.2	13,002.1	191.1	1.4%
<i>OWA Leases (included in ODOE)</i>	<i>1,015.6</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>1,015.6</i>	<i>1,008.7</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>0.7%</i>
* Final Budget = Expenditure Estimates +/- TBO, re-alignment of funds by Standard Account.						
** Total Actual Expenditures including Office Leases						

Total Remuneration for OWA Chair

An Order in Council for the part-time Chair position expired on June 16, 2024. The following table includes per diem remuneration paid to the Chair during fiscal year 2023-2024.

Reporting of Appointee Remuneration		
Appointee	Total Annual Remuneration	Per Diem Remuneration Rate
Pauline Niles	\$53,437.50	\$225.00 / day

APPENDIX B – OWA OFFICE LOCATIONS

TORONTO REGION

HEAD & TORONTO

123 Edward Street
Suite 1300
Toronto, ON M5G 1E2

SCARBOROUGH

305 Milner Avenue
Suite 918
Scarborough, ON M1B 3V4

SOUTHWEST REGION

LONDON

495 Richmond Street
Suite 810
London, ON N6A 5A9

KITCHENER/WATERLOO

4273 King Street East
Suite 300
Kitchener, ON N2P 2E9

WINDSOR

100 Ouellette Avenue
10th Floor
Windsor, ON N9A 6T3

SARNIA (SATELLITE)

171 Kendall Street
Sarnia, ON N7V 4G6

NORTH REGION

OTTAWA

347 Preston Street
3rd Floor
Ottawa, ON K1S 3H8

SAULT STE. MARIE

70 Foster Drive
Suite 480
Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 6V4

THUNDER BAY

435 South James Street
Suite 335
Thunder Bay, ON P7E 6S7

TIMMINS

60 Wilson Avenue
Suite 3030
Timmins, ON P4N 2S7

SUDBURY

159 Cedar Street
Suite 304
Sudbury, ON P3E 6A5

CENTRAL REGION

DOWNSVIEW

145 Sir William Hearst Avenue
Suite 125
Downsview, ON M3M 0B6

HAMILTON

119 King Street West
13th Floor
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y7

ST. CATHARINES

301 St. Paul Street
9th Floor
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7R4

MISSISSAUGA

10 Kingsbridge Garden Circle
Suite 512
Mississauga, ON L5R 3K6

Workplace Insurance Issues:

1-800-435-8980 (English)
1-800-661-6365 (French)

Health and Safety Reprisals:

1-855-659-7744 (Toll Free)

Website Address:

www.owa.gov.on.ca

Webmail Contact:

owaweb@ontario.ca