



**Office of the
Worker Adviser**

Office of the Worker Adviser

Annual Report

April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025

www.owa.gov.on.ca

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Executive Summary

The Office of the Worker Adviser (OWA) made significant progress in 2024–2025, enhancing service delivery for injured workers and their families. This report highlights achievements from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, with a focus on modernizing processes, reducing wait times, expanding outreach, and leveraging digital tools for continuous improvement.

OWA exceeded key performance targets across core service areas. The average wait time for an offer to review a case was 5.1 months, ahead of the 6-month goal. Additionally, the average time taken to complete a case review was 26 days, under the 30-day target. The agency submitted 1,339 written and oral submissions to the WSIB and WSIAT, well above the target of 1,000.

Client satisfaction remained strong, with results exceeding the 80% benchmark and showing year-over-year improvement. Survey response rates also surpassed expectations, reflecting high client engagement. In Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) reprisal cases, we achieved a 100% resolution rate through early and alternative dispute resolution, meeting the agency's goal.

Key modernization initiatives included piloting an appointment-based legal advice model and a province-wide case distribution system to improve service equity and reduce wait times. Outreach efforts expanded to colleges and the medical community, and the agency made strides towards establishing its social media presence to better connect with injured workers.

Looking ahead, OWA will continue advancing digital transformation through a client portal and e-signature capabilities.

These accomplishments reflect OWA's commitment to timely, high-quality service and its strategic focus on accessibility, modernization, and advocacy for Ontario's workers. We thank our staff for their ongoing dedication, hard work, and commitment to serving workers.

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 families. We help with workplace insurance (also known as workers' compensation) issues, and we support non-unionized workers who believe they have faced reprisals from their employers for exercising their rights under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

OWA is an agency of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) and is a key part of the workplace health, safety and insurance system. Along with other system partners, including the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal (WSIAT), and the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB), the OWA supports the government's goal to advance safe, fair, and harmonious workplace practices. These practices are essential to the social and economic well-being of the people of Ontario.

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.

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 workplace insurance or to better understand their rights and entitlements. We provide clear information, legal advice, and, when needed, referrals to other government programs and services.

The OWA also provides self-help resources to support workers who can manage their own claims or applications. We assist a wide range of clients with various workplace insurance matters.

In cases where a worker's injury claim has been denied by the WSIB, the OWA may provide legal representation. We take on appeals that have a reasonable chance of success – this may be based on strong evidence, clear facts, or concerns with the original decision, among other factors that support the worker's case.

Key Highlights and Examples of OWA Casework for 2024-2025

General Casework

The OWA represents hundreds of workers each year, significantly impacting the lives of injured workers and their families. Each successful case not only aids the individual worker but often sets important precedents, improving the adjudication process for future appeals and enhancing the overall system.

It is worth noting that OWA clients received **100% of the benefits awarded to them**, without having to pay any legal fees or give up a portion of their compensation for legal representation.

The following are some notable cases from 2024-2025 that illustrate OWA's contribution to fair and high-quality decision-making, showcasing the breadth of issues our advisers handled:

- **Service dog and alcohol use disorder with PTSD:** A paramedic with entitlement for post-traumatic stress sought expanded benefits for alcohol use disorder and a service dog. The WSIAT granted a permanent impairment based on a permanent aggravation of pre-existing alcohol use disorder. The Tribunal allowed entitlement for a service dog, even though the worker did not meet the WSIB's definition of "severely impaired". (Decision No. 258/24, 2024 ONWSIAT 765 (Can LII).)
- **Work transition time limit:** In a reconsideration request by the WSIB, the WSIAT upheld the principle that the time limit for filing an appeal of a worker's work transition plan or suitable occupation runs from the date that they are reasonably able to discover that it is not suitable. (Decision No. 360/24R, 2024 ONWSIAT 1858 (Can LII).)
- **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease in rubber worker:** The worker was employed by a rubber manufacturing firm for 34 years. The worker sought entitlement for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) which the Tribunal allowed. It found that the worker had been exposed to dust, fumes, mist, gases and second-hand smoke and that those occupational exposures were a significant contributing factor in the development of his disease. (Decision No. 808/24, 2024 ONWSIAT 1399 (Can LII).)
- **Schizophrenia and psychotraumatic disability:** A worker was struck in the head by a crane and fell 12 feet from a ladder onto a concrete floor. The Tribunal granted entitlement for schizophrenia under the WSIB's psychotraumatic disability policy. Their symptoms of depression and anxiety were, however, covered by their previously awarded permanent impairment for post-traumatic stress disorder. (Decision No. 1540/24, 2025 ONWSIAT 243 (Can LII).)
- **Traumatic mental stress:** A worker was exposed to series of threatening incidents culminating in a replica gun being held to his head by a coworker. The worker believed it was real and that their life was threatened. The Tribunal allowed the worker's appeal and granted entitlement for traumatic mental stress. (Decision No. 1097/24, 2024 ONWSIAT 1433 (Can LII).)
- **Work-related fatal drug overdose:** An Appeals Resolution Officer (ARO) found that a worker's substance abuse disorder was caused by their compensable traumatic

amputation. As a result, their death by drug overdose was also work-related, and their family was entitled to survivor benefits. (WSIB, unreported).

- **Prostate cancer in gold miner:** An ARO granted a work entitlement for prostate cancer resulting from exposures to multiple carcinogens while working as a gold miner for over 30 years. (WSIB, unreported).
- **Cohabitation when not living together:** The WSIAT found that the claimant and the deceased worker were cohabitating, even though he maintained a separate residence. Based on all the evidence, the worker and the claimant were in a conjugal relationship. The claimant was entitled to survivors' benefits. (Decision No. 1549/24, 2024 ONWSIAT 1938 (Can LII).)

These cases are a few examples of the OWA's contributions in achieving justice and fairness for workers, contributing to a more equitable system for all.

Occupational Disease

The identification and prevention of occupational diseases continue to be a challenge. These diseases often take years to manifest. 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 codified under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* (WSIA) as a Schedule 3 presumed occupational disease associated with processes involving McIntyre Powder, leading to previously denied claims being reconsidered under the new presumption.

2024-2025 Highlights

- Entitlement to various Occupational Diseases: Eight decisions were made regarding initial entitlement to various occupational diseases, including lung cancer, COPD, and prostate cancer. Of these, four were successfully resolved at the operating level of the WSIB, and one at the Appeals Services Division.

- Benefit Disbursements: Several cases resulted in various benefits paid to the estates or survivors. The OWA is aware of \$1,024,205.89 in disbursements to its clients.
- Significant Achievement: One of the claims allowed was for prostate cancer by the Appeals Services Division. In this situation, there was persuasive evidence that the worker's employment exposures made a significant contribution to the development of their prostate cancer.

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, generators, 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 within the meaning of the WSIA.

2024-2025 Highlights

- Successfully resolved and closed multiple files, expanding entitlements for clients.
- The OWA received decisions for seven clients where four decisions were granted in whole or in part.
- Continued focus on building staff capacity through ongoing and regular meetings of the community of practice and close collaboration with Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) is ongoing to resolve these complex cases.

Sarnia Occupational Disease Cluster – Owens Corning

The OWA has successfully concluded its work on the Owens Corning cluster. As of the end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year, all retainers have been fulfilled and all files officially closed. Since its inception, the OWA resolved 110 cases. This marks the completion of a significant chapter in the agency's advocacy for workers and their families affected by occupational disease in Sarnia.

Rubber Workers – Kitchener/Waterloo

The OWA continues to represent Rubber Workers in OWA's Southwest region, with cases arising from a systemic WSIB review and ongoing referrals from the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW).

2024-2025 Highlights

- Fourteen decisions were received this fiscal year, with seven retainers satisfied.

- One favorable decision at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal (WSIAT) granted initial entitlement for COPD.
- One interim WSIAT decision confirmed workplace exposures and requested a medical assessor's report to determine causation and compatibility for a diagnosis of pulmonary fibrosis.

Kellogg's – London

A new occupational disease cluster has emerged in the city of London, referred to as the Kellogg's cluster, with early cases being referred by OHCOW. Respiratory conditions are the overarching health issues and injury facing these workers coupled with sinus problems. We are anticipating seeing further cases including asthma, chronic cough, pneumonia and COPD.

2024-2025 Highlights

- OHCOW referred two files for initial claim filing assistance.
- The OWA advanced six submissions, with two decisions received at the operating level of WSIB. Both decisions denied entitlement for chronic sinus and respiratory conditions, including a gastroesophageal reflux disease known as GERD, chronic cough, pneumonia, and basal cell carcinoma.
- The cluster is expected to grow, with over 15 additional referrals anticipated from OHCOW in the upcoming fiscal year.

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

Over the course of 2024-2025, the OWA has worked to increase its presence in local communities by holding more outreach events. The OWA is also working towards increasing its reach through social media and plans to enhance educational materials to help more injured workers.

Injured Workers and the General Public

The OWA launched a new agency-wide outreach strategy to strengthen and expand our connections with key groups, including injured workers, college paralegal programs, community organizations, and medical professionals. Through educational webinars and in-person sessions, we are sharing important information about the OWA's work and mandate.

As part of this initiative, we have begun collaborating with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to deliver accredited educational sessions across the province.

These outreach activities included:

- Fourteen engagement emails were sent to Injured Worker Groups, with ongoing planning to deliver webinar presentations to four of the groups next fiscal year, along with ongoing follow up with the other groups for scheduling; a Webinar presentation took place with the Windsor-Essex group of two staff members, and they will be referring injured workers to the OWA.
- Six Outreach Webinars to College Paralegal Program groups hosted approximately 140 students and college administrators.
- Thirty engagement emails were sent to Community Groups with ongoing planning to deliver Webinar presentations next fiscal; and three outreach webinars hosted approximately 50 attendees.

Additionally, to assist with the rebranding of the OWA web site and establishment of our social media accounts to further expand our outreach efforts to online audiences, we engaged the services of a marketing company in December 2024.

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 services agencies. The OWA also participates in partnerships at the provincial level.

- **Collaboration with WSIB:** The OWA continues to work closely with the WSIB to support meaningful system improvements that benefit injured workers. This collaboration includes establishing mechanisms to expedite the processing of claim files for priority cases, advocating for administrative changes with the WSIB to better protect workers' rights to representation, and promoting awareness of the OWA's free services. These joint efforts aim to enhance access to justice, streamline processes, and ensure that workers are informed and supported throughout their claims journey.

In 2024-2025, the OWA participated in one formal consultation by the WSIB regarding the proposed changes to WSIB policy arising from an earlier value-for-money audit of the Serious Injury Program. The OWA provided detailed submissions on draft changes to the WSIB's Independent Living Policy. The Serious Injury Program is a critical source of supports for severely injured workers.

- **Collaboration with WSIAT:** The OWA provided ongoing, informal feedback and troubleshooting to the WSIAT before and after its implementation of new pre-hearing procedures in May 2024. The OWA did continue to participate in the WSIAT Advisory Group and provide input on various planned initiatives.
- **Collaboration with OHCOW:** 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 not only raises awareness about our services but also positions itself as an effective contributor to the workplace safety and insurance community, ensuring better outcomes for workers and their families.

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.

Workplace Insurance and Safety Hub (WISH)

The implementation of the Workplace Insurance and Safety Hub (WISH) continues to transform how the OWA delivers its core services of advice, education, and representation to Ontario workers. Over the past year, WISH has enabled the OWA to:

- **Analyze and project waitlist trends,** supporting more responsive and evidence-based decision-making.
- **Automate or remove outdated workflows,** reducing administrative burdens and freeing up time for client-focused work.
- **Adapt and change,** in response to employee feedback and changes from the WSIB and WSIAT.

In 2024–2025, OWA employees actively engaged with WISH, contributing to a significant volume of activity:

- 44,548 activities recorded, capturing communications with clients and other data entries.
- 42,982 tasks and events completed such as document reviews, following up with health care practitioners, attending hearings and mediation, etc.
- 63,356 documents created or uploaded, averaging 174 documents per day in this fiscal year.

These numbers reflect the growing use and adoption of digital tools at the OWA. Looking forward we will continue to build on these successes and:

- **Introduce a pilot project for electronic signatures** to reduce our reliance on physical mail, minimize delays, and improve response times for clients.
- **Launch our client portal** through a secure and mobile-friendly platform to allow Ontario workers to submit new requests and inquiries, upload and receive documents, and communicate securely and directly with OWA staff.

Summary Advice

In fiscal 2024-2025, the OWA continued with a mandatory Summary Advice procedure, which ensured that clients received the necessary legal advice from a worker adviser at the initial stages of their appeal journey. Clients are provided 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 new approach proved to be successful and allowed 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 attempt to decrease wait times for case reviews.

In the fiscal 2024-2025, the average wait time for clients to receive an offer of review from the OWA – indicating that a worker adviser is available to review their file – was 5.1 months. While this is slightly higher than the previous year's average of 4.9 months, this modest increase reflects a

strategic effort to address a backlog of long-waiting clients, laying the groundwork for significantly reduced wait times in the coming 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 case review to begin after the client was added to the waitlist was 6.7 months.

By implementing a more robust front-end service delivery model – offering legal advice and conducting more thorough decision documents assessments – we have been able to increase the quality of services. This approach not only ensures that those who are eligible receive timely support but also empowers others to resolve their issues independently or gain closure through high-quality legal guidance.

The number of files waiting for case review was also slightly higher than the previous year from 286 to 309. This represents an increase of 8% in the number of clients waiting for service. As part of ensuring accurate analysis of data, an audit of all cases on the wait list was conducted. The findings determined that 89 workers declined our services as they decided not to proceed or they found a new representative. This is a decrease of 25% from the 119 of the previous year.

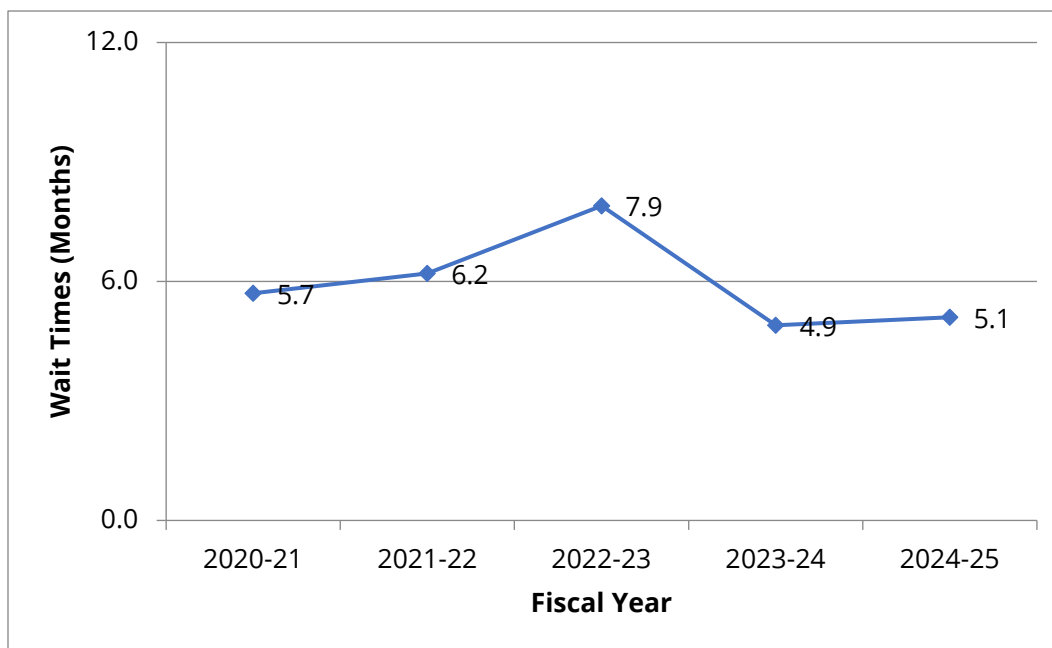


Figure 1 Wait Times

Staff Learning Program

In 2024-2025, 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 sessions including Annual Update in Workplace Safety and Insurance Law held in May 2024 and Navigating Complex Medical in March 2025.
- Training made available from our system partners including: WSIAT sessions on the roll out of the new pre-hearing process which launched in May 2024. OWA in-house training related to this change was also developed and implemented including sessions for both administrative and legal staff.
- Representative Educational Program (REP) delivered by WSIAT as well as quarterly stakeholder update sessions.
- The WSIB provided a dedicated training on their Permanent Impairment Program in May 2024.

In addition, internally developed training included:

- Occupational Disease Working Group (ODWG) learning opportunities continued with a focus on GE cluster including with sessions such as the Demers Report and a GE overview. In the fall of 2024, the ODWG moved to support newer staff with monthly case conferences dedicated solely to occupational disease discussions with senior staff. Communication thread initiated for interested staff.
- New Worker Adviser training which was delivered to a large group of new Advisers and made effective use of replays of recorded sessions combined with live group discussions.
- To support the anticipated release of the updated Case Processing Manual (CPM), regional sessions developed and delivered to staff.
- WISH enhancements throughout the year were accompanied by brief virtual sessions and/or tools to support learning.

A key objective of our training is to meet 75% of licensed staff's continuing professional development training hours through a combination of internally developed and delivered training and external training attended online.

OWA'S Workplace Insurance Program Statistics

In 2024-2025, the OWA introduced a new Key Performance Indicator (KPI) framework designed to drive continuous improvement, enhance client satisfaction, and increase organizational efficiency and productivity. This framework reflects our commitment to delivering timely, high-quality services while maintaining strong accountability and financial stewardship.

The new KPIs are aligned with the agency's strategic goals and focus on measurable outcomes that matter – such as service timeliness, staff productivity, and client experience. Built on a foundation of clear, realistic, and transparency measured metrics, the framework empowers staff, supports informed decision-making, and ensures that performance targets are both ambitious and achievable. By embedding these indicators into our operations, we are better positioned to monitor progress, identify opportunities for improvement, and deliver meaningful results for the workers we serve.

Advisory Services and Case Review

The figure 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 2024-2025 fiscal year, the OWA received 2,666 new service requests, provided 2,069 instances of summary advice, and 1,020 workers requested representation services. Compared to the previous year, this reflects a 1% decrease in overall service requests, an 18% increase in summary advice provided, and a 3% increase in representation services.

The OWA completed 804 case reviews. In addition, we offered immediate representation to 82 clients. This represents a slight increase of 1% of the combined total from 2023-2024.¹

¹ With the adoption of our new case management system and a change in procedures, the OWA now distinguishes between clients who receive a case review and who are offered immediate representation.

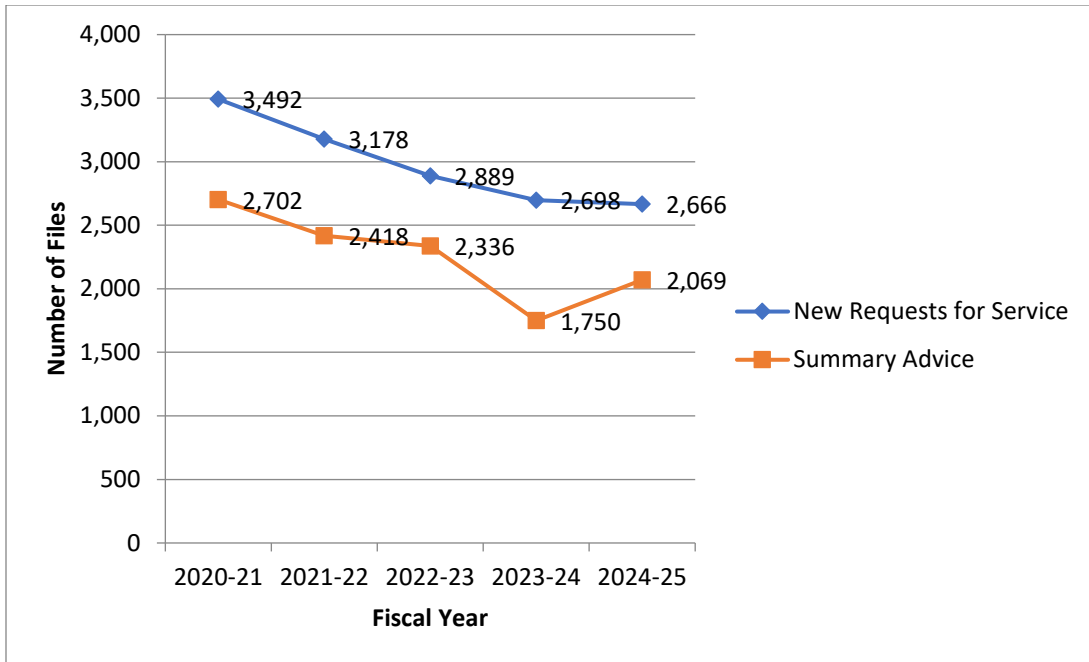


Figure 2 New Requests for Service

To avoid delay in dealing with priority cases, in 2024-2025 106 workers met the criteria for priority case reviews. This is a decrease of 19% from 2023-2024.

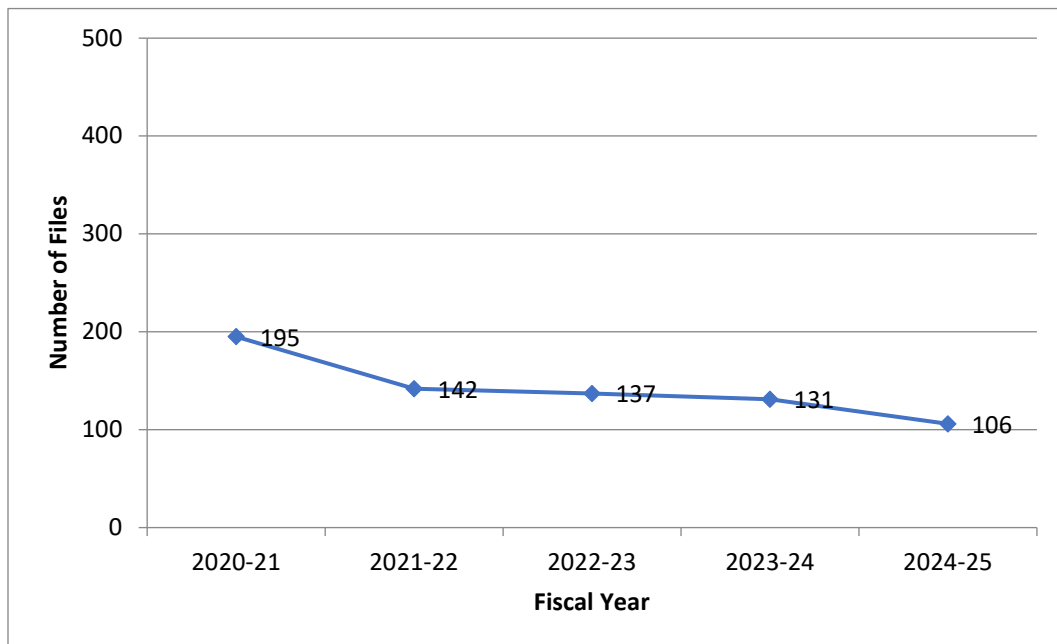


Figure 3 Number of Priority Cases

Case Inventory

The figure below shows the evolution and success of work 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.

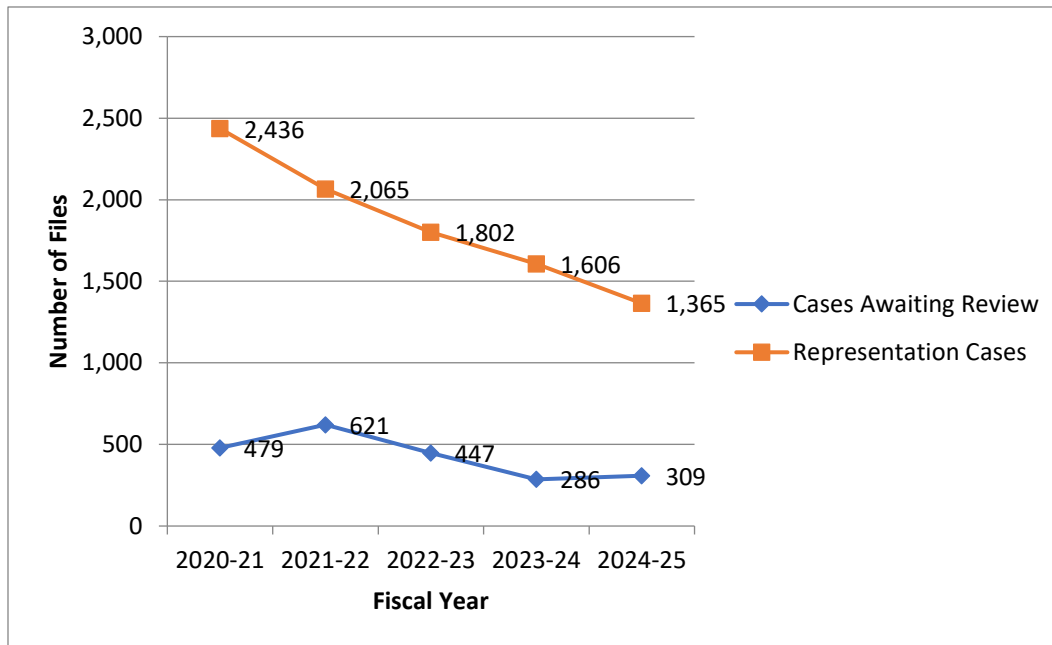


Figure 4 Total Case Inventory

Service Requests and Representation Trends

Over the last several years, the data indicates a general decline in the number of new requests for service. The trend suggests 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:

- **Stabilization in New Service Requests:** Over the past four years, the number of new service requests has gradually declined. However, the trend appears to be stabilizing with only a slight decrease from 2023-2024 to 2024-2025.
- **Modest growth in Representation Requests:** While requests for representation have fluctuated in recent years, there was a modest increase from 2023-2024 to 2024-2025.
- **Slight Increase in Cases Reviewed for Representation:** The number of cases reviewed for representation and clients offered immediate representation increased slightly compared to the previous year.

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 2024-2025, the OWA resolved 64% of disputes without a hearing through early and alternative dispute resolution.

2024-2025 Highlights:

- The total number of decisions from all levels increased by 5% from 905 in 2023-2024 to 952 in 2024-2025.
- The total number of issues in decisions from all levels increased by 17%, from 1,500 in 2023-2024 to 1,761 in 2024-2025.

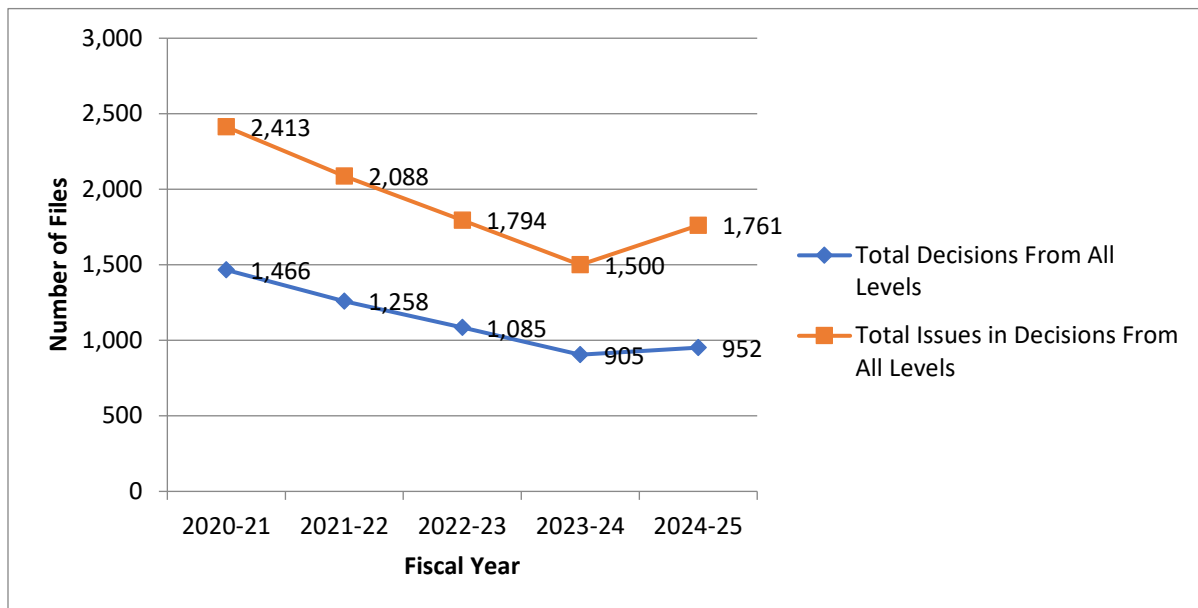


Figure 5 Total Decisions and Total Issues in Decisions

These changes reflect an overall increase in the number of decisions and issues processed across all levels.

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

2024-2025 saw an increase of 23% in the number of decisions at the WSIB Operating level. However, we have seen a decrease in the number of decisions at the WSIB Appeals level with a 18% decrease from last fiscal year and a decrease of 7% at the WSIAT from 2023-2024 to 2024-2025.

2024-2025 saw a slight decrease of 1% in the percentage of issues allowed at all levels from 55% the previous fiscal year.

WSIB Operating Level: The percentage of issues allowed at the Operating Level increased by 9% over last year, indicating higher success rates at the Operating Level.

WSIB Appeals Level: The Appeals Branch has seen a decrease by 13% in the percentage of issues allowed.

WSIAT: The WSIAT has a fluctuating allowance percentage, with a notable drop in the last two fiscal years, 9% in 2023-2024 and 6% in 2024-2025.

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 their OWA's representation service to them. Of the 242 (above the target 240) individuals who responded to the survey in 2024-2025, 89.2% were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the service they received.

Performance Measure Targets and Results

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year and into 2024-2025, the OWA conducted an in-depth review of its performance measures and made necessary changes to adapt and meet our needs based on our service modernization model.

There are several new performance measures that were not previously measured due to the limitation of our case management system. However, with the implementation of our new case management system, the OWA can report on those measure for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

These new performance measures include wait times for summary advice, wait times for case (merit) review, the total number of written and oral submissions at WSIB and at WSIAT, and the number of new requests for service. Given that these are new performance measures, there are no statistics from previous years to offer a comparison.

Measure	Long-Term Target	23-24	24-25	Year over Year Change
Wait Times for Summary Advice	80% in 3 Days	N/A	72%	---
Wait Times for Offer to Review Case	6 Months	4.9	5.1	4%
Wait Times for Case Review	80% in 30 Days	N/A	75%	---
Total Number of Written and Oral Submissions at WSIB and at WSIAT	1,000	1,314	1,339	1.6%
Client Satisfaction Rate	90%	87.2%	89.2%	+2%
Number of Client Satisfaction Survey Responses	240	204	242	+19%
Number of New Requests	10% Increase	2,698	2,666	-1%
Overall Employee Engagement Survey Rate	75%	69%	66%	-3%
Percentage of Representation Cases Resolved Through Early & Alternative Dispute Resolution	80%	95%	100%	5%

Table 1 Key Performance Indicators

Occupational Health and Safety Reprisals Program

Description of Services

The Occupational Health and Safety Reprisals Program (OHSRP) assists non-unionized workers who have been penalized by their employers for exercising their workplace health and safety rights.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) prohibition on reprisals enabling workers to freely raise health and safety concerns and fully exercise their rights under the Act. The OWA contributes to the overall effectiveness of the health and safety system by helping workers enforce this important right.

Services provided to workers include:

- Information and advice;
- Representation in complaints under section 50 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA); 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 the reprisals 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 continued 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 to learn more about the program's performance.

Client Demand and Service Delivery

- **Service Requests:** The OHSRP received 671 new requests in 2024-2025 fiscal year.
- **Clients Served:** 636 workers were provided a service including information, summary advice, referrals, and case reviews. The remaining clients are carried over to fiscal year 2025-2026.²

Client Satisfaction and Effective Resolutions

- **High Satisfaction Rate:** 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.
- **Rapid Response:** Maintained a focus on efficiency by ensuring most cases received information and advice on the same day the request was made.

Outreach and Educational Activities

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

² Year over Year comparisons are not available due to a change in data collection given the adoption of our new case management system.

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

In 2024-2025, the OHSRP staff continued its outreach efforts 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 presented at a Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinics general meeting delivering information about the OWA, its role, trends that have been observed, and the types of cases that make up most of the work coming to the Reprisals unit.

Appendix A – Financial Report for the Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Figures in \$000.0

Standard Account	2024-2025 Expenditure Estimates	2024-2025 In-year Board Approvals	2024-2025 Year-end Budget *	2024-2025 Year-end Actuals **	Year-end Budget to Actuals Variance	% Variance
Salaries & Wages (S&W)	8,370.6	(186.1)	8,184.5	7,715.5	(469.0)	-5.7%
Benefits	1,883.7	-	1,883.7	2,294.0	410.3	21.8%
Total S&W + Benefits	10,254.3	(186.1)	10,068.2	10,009.4	(58.8)	-0.6%
Other Direct Operating Expenses (ODOE)						
Transportation & Communication	296.0	-	296.0	79.7	(216.3)	-73.1%
Services (incl. Office Leases)	1,674.2	-	1,674.2	1,779.5	105.3	6.3%
Supplies & Equipment	100.0	-	100.0	91.5	(8.5)	-8.5%
Total ODOE	2,070.2	-	2,070.2	1,950.7	(119.5)	-5.8%
Grand Total	12,324.5	(186.1)	12,138.4	11,960.1	(178.3)	-1.5%

Table 2 Financial Report for the Fiscal Year 2024-2025

* Final Budget = Expenditure Estimates +/- TBO, re-alignment of funds by Standard Account.

** Total Actual Expenditures including Office Leases.

Total Remuneration for the 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 2024-2025.

Appointee	Total Annual Remuneration	Per Diem Remuneration Rate
Pauline Niles	\$20,745.00	\$225.00 / day

Table 3 Reporting of Appointee Remuneration

Appendix B – OWA Office Locations

Toronto Region

Toronto

1300-123 Edward Street
Toronto, ON M4S 0A2

Scarborough

918-305 Milner Avenue
Scarborough, ON M1B 3V4

Southwest Region

London

810-495 Richmond Street
London, ON N6A 5A9

Kitchener-Waterloo

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

Sarnia

171 Kendall Street
Point Edward
Sarnia, ON N7V 4G6

Windsor

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

North Region

Sault Ste. Marie

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

Thunder Bay

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

Timmins

303-60 Wilson Avenue
Timmins, ON P4N 2S7

Sudbury

304-159 Cedar Street
Sudbury, ON P3E 6A5

Ottawa

320-347 Preston Street
Ottawa, ON K1S 3H8

Central Region

Downsview

125-145 Sir William Hearst
Avenue
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

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