

John W. Saunders

Partner
Toronto

john-saunders@hicksmorley.com
416.864.7247

Year of Call: Ontario, 1988



John Saunders is a senior labour and employment lawyer in Hicks Morley's Toronto office. He has over three-and-a-half decades of experience advising employers on a wide range of labour and employment issues. John's practice includes collective agreement negotiations, rights and interest arbitrations, human rights applications, occupational health and safety matters, and wrongful dismissal litigation.

John has particular expertise in municipal law with regard to fire and paramedic issues and is a frequent speaker at industry conferences. He provides ongoing negotiation advice to fire and paramedic departments on staffing, deployment, benefit issues, accommodation, mandatory retirement, presumptive disability legislation, negotiations and interest arbitrations.

John has represented numerous municipalities and major corporations in coroner's inquests and judicial inquiries into fatalities. In addition, he works with employers in the healthcare, manufacturing, waste disposal, forestry, nuclear and property assessment sectors.

Outside of his law practice, John is the past chairman of the Board of Elders of his local church, and he sits on the boards of a number of charitable foundations. He is an avid downhill skier and enjoys fixing things at his cottage.

Areas of Practice

Employment Law, Labour Relations, Litigation, Human Rights, Occupational Health and Safety

Industries

Energy and Utilities, Government Ministries and Agencies, Healthcare, Manufacturing, Municipalities and Municipal Agencies, Technology, Transportation and Warehousing

Awards and Recognition

The Best Lawyers in Canada™ (2005–2024) – Labour and Employment Law

Canadian Legal Lexpert® Directory (2014–2023) – Labour Relations, Employment Law (Repeatedly Recommended)

Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (2014) – President’s Award

Who's Who Legal – Global Leader (2023) – Labour & Employment

Representative Work

Engaged in Coroner’s Inquest for major automobile manufacturer arising from fatality concerning the usage of a lift truck.

Represented a major hospital who terminated over 150 employees for benefit fraud.

Upheld decision of fire department to downstaff when too many firefighters called in sick.

Engaged in Coroner’s Inquest into triple fatality in boating accident and response by emergency services.

Successfully defended decision of an EMS to not have a pregnant paramedic ride third in an ambulance as part of duty to accommodate.

Successfully resisted certification applications in waste disposal industry.

Upheld the use of video surveillance in plywood mill.

Represented the contracted employer in a sale of a business and single employer application in the first federal government-owned contractor-operated contract.

Assisted an EMS service in addressing a paramedic who crashed an ambulance while having large dosages of oxycodone in his system.

Successfully overturned a Federal Court of Appeal decision which required a nuclear plant to produce medical isotopes during a labour dispute.

Ongoing representation of large municipalities in Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Maritimes in their fire negotiations and interest arbitrations.

Select Publications and Presentations

Moderator, “The HR Impact of Today’s Municipal Environment” Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association 2023 Fall Conference (September 13, 2023)

“Bargaining and Municipal Amalgamation” Emergency Services Steering Committee (June 7, 2023)

“Case Law Update – A Quick Review of Recent Issues and Key Decisions” Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs Labour Relations Symposium (May 4, 2023)

“Labour Relations 101 Workshop,” “Urban Breakout Session,” and “Special Services: Who Are You Going to Call” Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Labour Relations Seminar (January 24–26, 2023)

“Infectious Diseases Projections and Labour Relations Update” Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association: 2022 Fall Conference and Annual General Meeting (September 15, 2022)

“How to Develop an Establishing and Regulating Bylaw” Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Trade Show Conference (May 7, 2022)

“Labour Relations 101,” “COVID-19 in the Fire Sector,” and “Urban Breakout Session” Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Labour Relations Seminar (January 18–20, 2022)

“Working from Home is one Change that is likely to Stay” Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association Virtual One-Day Symposium Series: Managing Change in Fluid Environments (May 14, 2021)

Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs 2021 Virtual Labour Relations Symposium (May 6, 2021)

“Dealing with Picket Lines and Picket Injunctions” Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association (March 3, 2021)

“Labour Relations 101” Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Labour Relations Seminar (January 19–January 21, 2021)

“What is the Difference in Planning in a Right to Strike World versus an Interest Arbitration World?” and “How do you Prepare for a Labour Dispute?” Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association Virtual One-Day Symposium Series: Negotiations Strategies: Creating and Claiming Value (February 26, 2021)

“Managing your Fire Department during COVID-19” Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (April 29, 2020)

“Suburban/Rural Breakout: Staffing Issues” Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Labour Relations Seminar (January 29, 2020)

“Public Sector Restructuring” 2019 Ontario Municipal Administrators’ Association Fall Workshop (October 17, 2019)

“Council Gone Wild” Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association Fall Conference 2019 (September 10, 2019)

“Provincial Governance Review” Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association One-Day Seminar (June 24, 2019)

“Labour Relations Certificate: Collective Bargaining” Ryerson University and Lancaster House (May 16, 2019)

“Annual Hicks Morley Legal Update” Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association Spring Workshop (April 10–12, 2019)

“Bill 47 & 57 Bootcamp” Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association Conference (February 12, 2019)

“Urban Chiefs – Managing Your Service” Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Labour Relations Seminar (January 24, 2019)

“Labour Relations 101” Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Labour Relations Seminar (January 22, 2019)

“#MeToo for Employers” Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs Annual Education Conference (September 16, 2018)

“Bargaining in the Broader Public Sector” Emergency Services Steering Committee (May 25, 2018)

“Interest Arbitration Skills Enhancement Program” Ministry of Labour and the Ontario Arbitrators’ Association (April 13–14, 2018)

“Labour Relations Seminar” Greater Vancouver Fire Chiefs’ Association (January 31, 2018)

“Fire, Police & Emergency Services Bargaining Trends” Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Labour Relations Seminar, Toronto (January 17–18, 2018)

“Medical Marijuana in the Workplace” Toronto Labour, Arbitration and Policy Conference Lancaster House (December 7, 2017)

“Trends in Fire Negotiations Across Canada” Fire Chiefs’ Association of British Columbia (June 8, 2017)

“Good Faith Bargaining, Freedom of Expression and Statutory Freezes” Bargaining in the Broader Public Sector Conference, Lancaster House (December 2016)

“Firefighters Behaving Badly in a Social Media World” Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (September 26, 2016)

“It’s Not Just the Rescue – The Role of Law and Communications in Major Incidents” Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (September 19, 2015)

“Legal Liability Following the Event” Durham Region 3P Symposium (October 30, 2015)

“Paramedic Negotiation Trends” Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs (May 15, 2015)

“Negotiations in the Fire Sector” Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (January 21, 2015)

Memberships and Affiliations

Canadian Association of Counsel to Employers – Member

Canadian Bar Association – Member

Ontario Bar Association – Member (Labour & Employment Law, Law Practice Management and Municipal Law)

Education

Queen’s University, LL.B.

University of Toronto, B.Sc. (Hons.)