

VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT: NOT PART OF THE JOB

Violence and harassment are a daily reality for far too many workers in Canada. Both are preventable and neither should ever be seen as “just part of the job.” That’s why this Day of Mourning, Canada’s unions are asking our government to do more to prevent and stop workplace violence and harassment.

What is workplace violence and harassment?

Workplace violence isn’t just physical assault or attacks. It also includes threatening behaviour, verbal or written threats, harassment and verbal abuse. It can happen once or be part of a pattern.

All workers can experience violence and harassment on the job, but there are many factors – such as working with the public, with money, where alcohol is served or in isolation – that leave some workers more at risk.

Perpetrators can be clients, co-workers, supervisors or members of the public. Violence and harassment can happen in the traditional workplace or off-site at work-related events.

Workers experiencing domestic violence often experience harassment, stalking and violence from abusers when they’re at work. This can put co-workers and others in the workplace at risk too.

What unions can do

Canada’s unions can and must do all we can to lead by example on preventing violence and harassment in the workplace, including challenging it when we see it.

We have fought hard to win legislation that prevents violence and harassment and protects workers. That includes:

- Winning legislation that requires employers to make sure workplaces are safe and healthy.
- Supporting workers who report incidents of violence and harassment.
- Bargaining health and safety language on harassment and violence, including on domestic violence, into collective agreements.

What employers can do

All employers in Canada are required to ensure workplaces are safe and healthy. Here are some of the ways they can do that:

- Develop policies and programs in cooperation with workplace health and safety committees, and invest in training to prevent workplace violence, including harassment.
- Ensure appropriate staffing levels to reduce the risks of workplace violence.

- Assess psychosocial hazards in the workplace as they would assess physical hazards, and work with workplace health and safety committees to develop an action plan for addressing them.
- To address domestic violence at work, employers can conduct workplace risk assessments, training and safety planning, and ensure supports are in place for workers experiencing domestic violence.

What the federal government can do

Here are ways the federal government can help prevent and stop workplace harassment and violence:

- **Make it safe for workers to report harassment and violence by implementing anti-reprisal measures, including whistleblower protection.** We can only resolve workplace violence and harassment if workers know they can safely report it and talk about it.
- **Hire and train more federal health and safety officers.** There has been a steep decline in the number of federal health and safety officers monitoring and investigating federally regulated workplaces in Canada. Training for these inspectors also needs to be improved, so it is on par with what many of their provincial counterparts receive.
- **Recognize domestic violence as a workplace hazard.** Taking this next step will raise awareness around the need for employers to conduct workplace risk assessments, training and safety planning, and to ensure supports are in place for workers experiencing domestic violence.

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