

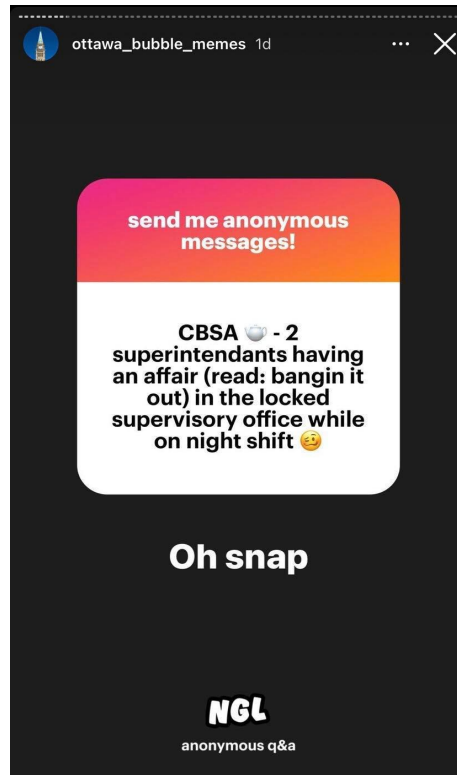
February 2023 Environmental Scan



On social media

- Confessions on Ottawa_Bubble_Memes instagram stories
- Seamus O'Regan and Liberals scrapping bills 377 and 525







Seamus O'Regan Jr ✓

@SeamusORegan

...

Bills 377 and 525 were two of the most anti-worker, union-bashing bills this country has ever seen - put forward by the Harper Conservatives.

We scrapped them. We believe in unions. We believe in workers.

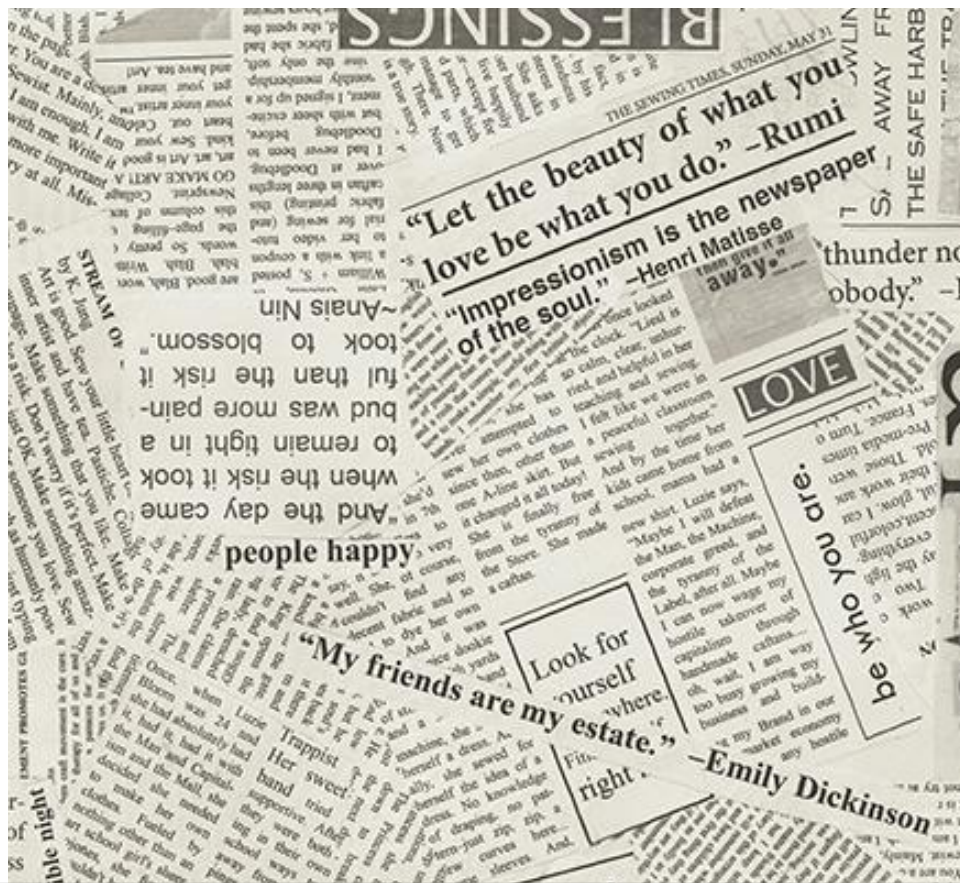


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In the news

- Ottawa ratifies first global treaty to end violence, harassment at work
- Harassment of Ottawa Fire Service's first non-binary firefighter
- AFN chief calls probe colonial
- CFJE awards journalists facing harassment



Ottawa ratifies first global treaty to end violence, harassment at work

The federal government has joined numerous other countries in vowing to fight violence and harassment in the workplace.

Seamus O'Regan Jr., Canada's minister of labour, ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190, the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (C190) in Geneva on Jan. 30.

The government worked closely with provincial and territorial governments to deliver on its commitment to ratify C190, which will apply across all jurisdictions, Ottawa said.

More than one in five people have experienced violence and harassment at work, according to a previous analysis released by ILO.

Canada passes ILO Convention C-190 on the right to work without violence and harassment

"Workers deserve a safe workplace. This historic convention will establish the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment." — Bea Bruske, Canadian Labour Congress President

Ottawa (31 Jan. 2023) — C-190 is the first global treaty that acknowledges the universal right to a world of work free from violence and harassment, and establishes a clear framework for ending it. Once ratified, governments are accountable for preventing and addressing all forms of violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. It gives unions the tools they need to make work safer for everyone.

Workers should not face violence and harassment in the workplace

"We know that 7 in 10 workers experience some form of harassment and violence, with women and equity-deserving workers experiencing higher rates and deeper impacts on their jobs, their health, and their well-being," said Bea Bruske, Canadian Labour Congress President. "Ratifying C-190 not only sends a powerful signal that Canadians believe everyone deserves to work free from violence and harassment but it also gives governments, unions and employers a roadmap for preventing it, addressing it, and one day eliminating it."

City quietly resumed investigation into alleged hate crime, firefighters deny wrongdoing

The City of Ottawa is continuing a workplace harassment investigation into an alleged attack on the fire department's first openly non-binary firefighter, even while there are active criminal charges laid in the case.

The city quietly resumed the investigation despite the firefighters' association initially saying the department would wait for the criminal process to play out and now both men charged say they did nothing wrong.

A criminal court will determine whether this was a case of an on-duty hate crime or hazing gone wrong.

Police have called it a hate crime but what neither department has revealed is that the September 2022 attack allegedly victimized the first openly non-binary firefighter at Ottawa Fire Services (OFS) and the charges are against their fellow pump mate and own captain and, according to sources, began as hazing.

Six days elapsed between the incident on Sept. 14 at a Barrhaven fire station before it was ultimately reported to police by the victim on Sept. 20.

The 'blue wall' of silence allows bullying, sexual abuse and violence to infect police forces

After an alleged targeted campaign of bullying and sexual harassment by fellow members of the Vancouver Police Department, Const. Nicole Chan died by suicide in January 2019.

A coroner's inquest is now underway, examining the circumstances leading to her senseless, preventable death — despite the fact that key witnesses, including the officers at the centre of the British Columbia Police Act investigation, aren't on the witness list.

Police violence and misconduct are once again in the global spotlight after unarmed Black man Tyre Nichols died following a severe police beating in Memphis, Tenn.

A pervasive history of bullying and sexual misconduct plagues law enforcement agencies and illustrates the failure of police forces to police themselves. Perhaps this culture might also explain the acts of violence police officers perpetrate on civilians.

In Canada, sexual harassment lawsuits involving the RCMP and targeted bullying, discrimination and sexualized violence in many police departments demonstrate how law enforcement leadership is unable to keep its members safe from one another.

Health Workers Are Facing Record Levels of Violence

Health-care workers are facing a rising tide of violence in B.C.'s two largest health authorities.

The Fraser Health authority issued a record 2,370 "Code Whites" across 14 facilities in the 2021–22 fiscal year, more than triple the number of calls from 2014–15. The Code White call is used to alert staff to aggressive people in health-care settings without alarming patients.

That data — which The Tyee obtained through a freedom of information request — shows that 1,660 of the Code Whites declared in the last year were "physical," indicating an assault or the threat of one. There were only 514 such Code Whites issued in 2014–15.

The number of Code Whites issued at Vancouver Coastal Health facilities rose 61 per cent between 2017 and 2022. That authority, which delivers health-care services in Vancouver, Richmond and part of the North Shore, issued 1,040 Code Whites in the 2017–18 fiscal year. Last year, it issued 1,689.

Code White

Hospitals use "Code Whites" to warn staff about violent or dangerous people. Facilities in the Fraser Health authority have used them at unprecedented rates in recent years.

Howard Levitt: Man who lost testicle from getting hit by supervisor awarded more than \$295,000

You have recruited a highly regarded executive and become great friends. You believe your team is stronger because of her involvement. She does wonderful work. However, her behaviour with co-workers is problematic. Do you overlook and ignore the behaviour? Do you discipline or fire?

The wrong choice could be very expensive. In the recent Ontario Superior Court decision of *Osmani vs. Universal Structural Restorations Ltd.*, the employer paid a price which was staggering.

Rezart Osmani, a 48-year-old foreign worker from Albania, worked for USRL for only 14 months. But in that time, he was victim to some of the worst treatment we have seen, as detailed in the judge's ruling in the case. His supervisor constantly used racial slurs toward him. Osmani was threatened with deportation if he questioned his assigned tasks. When he was hurt on the job site, his supervisor interfered with his Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) claim, demanding that he not file a claim in order to save the employer money. Osmani felt obliged.

Worst of all, the supervisor hit Osmani in the testicles in front of all his co-workers with all of his might, doing so much damage that he later had to have the testicle removed.

AFN national chief calls outside probe of her workplace conduct 'colonial' and 'confrontational'

Assembly of First Nations National Chief RoseAnne Archibald claims the workplace misconduct investigation probing her treatment of staff is following a "colonial path" because its non-Indigenous investigators could "demonize" Indigenous cultural practices.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) launched an external investigation of Archibald's conduct last spring after four of her senior staff and the AFN's outgoing CEO accused her of bullying and harassment.

In a memo sent on Jan. 26 to chiefs-in-assembly, Archibald called the probe a "colonial legal process" that distracts from the AFN's real work.

"I have met the investigators and am concerned that they're non-Indigenous and may not have a grounding in our traditional practices and ways of being which could easily lead us down a colonial path of having this process demonize our cultural practices," she wrote in the memo, which was obtained by CBC News.

"This kind of non-Indigenous investigation is antagonistic, confrontational, and moves us further away from bringing healing and harmony to our working relationships."

Some First Nations leaders criticize probe into national chief's workplace conduct

Some First Nations chiefs are calling for a different type of workplace investigation to probe claims that the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations bullied and harassed staff — while others are urging the national advocacy organization to get back to business.

In a memo sent on Jan. 26 to chiefs-in-assembly, Assembly of First Nations National Chief RoseAnne Archibald called the probe into her workplace behaviour a "colonial legal process" that distracts from the AFN's real work.

Chief Wendy Jocko of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation told CBC News she wants to see a new investigation that's not led by an outside legal firm.

"There should be a new process that's grounded in cultural traditions and moving away from the colonial processes," Jocko said.

Archibald is taking aim at the external probe launched by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) last spring, citing concerns about the use of non-Indigenous investigators and claiming that she hasn't been told details of the allegations she faces.

New federal plan on gender-based violence merely offers a list of options and suggestions

CUPE has long joined allies and feminist organizations in calling for a robust, long-term, fully funded plan to end gender-based violence. But the federal government's recent National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, endorsed by provincial and territorial governments on November 9, 2022, does not go far enough to address violence at work or monitor outcomes.

The plan is proposing positive actions that provinces and territories can take in five areas: support for survivors and their families, violence prevention, improvements to the justice system, Indigenous-led approaches to ending violence, and service provision. The plan also rightfully acknowledges that gender-based violence and harassment often happen in the workplace and highlights the importance of awareness campaigns.

Unfortunately, there are no mechanisms compelling provincial and territorial governments to implement the recommended actions, no specific requirements, and no guidance on timelines or priorities. And the plan doesn't mention Canada's implementation of C-190 — the International Labour Organization Convention No. 190, the first global treaty on violence and harassment in the world of work.

1 in 5 workers experience violence, harassment at work: report

One in five people across the world have experienced some form of violence and harassment at work at some point in their lives, according to a new report.

A survey by global charity Lloyd's Register Foundation found that 20.9% of over 125,000 people from 121 countries experienced harassment and violence in the workplace.

Among those who experienced it, 58.5% said they experienced it more than once, while 27.5% said they suffered from multiple forms of violence and harassment at work.

Psychological form violence and harassment was the most frequently reported type (16.5%), according to the report, followed by physical (7.4%) and sexual (5.5%).

Recently, the International Labour Organisation released a guide for employers on how to address violence and harassment in the workplace.

If an employee takes a secret recording, is it grounds for cause dismissal?

In a recent decision out of Alberta, the court dealt with a situation that has become quite common in workplaces across Canada: an employee recording conversations at work without the other party's knowledge or consent.

Specifically, the court in *Rooney v GSL Chevrolet Cadillac* addressed whether or not an employer could dismiss an employee who engages in such secret recording for just cause.

In this case, the employee brought a claim against his employer alleging that he had been constructively dismissed as a result of fundamental changes that were unilaterally made to his role, resulting in a significant decrease in his overall compensation. The employer had also placed him on three separate unpaid suspensions.

There was no written contract of employment, so the employer did not have a contractual right to use this form of discipline.

Teachers surveyed on 'routine, pervasive' violence in elementary schools

A teacher survey launched this week investigates violence and aggression shown by pupils in elementary schools, says the union representing 83,000 elementary education workers.

“As (violence) is increasing, our governments are doing less and less,” said David Mastin, vice-president of the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario that represents teachers, education and professional support workers and early childhood workers. “Our members are experiencing this on the front lines, and children’s mental health is not being addressed adequately anywhere, let alone in our schools.

“It’s reaching epidemic levels and something needs to be done about it. But we need to collect the data before we can push and advocate for things we think are important.”

The online workplace violence survey will take place from Feb. 8 to March 8, with focus groups held near the end of March.

The federation is hoping raising awareness will lead to action to address what it says is an increase of incidents of violence beginning more than a decade ago.

'I want to evoke change': Firefighter files human rights complaint over years of alleged racist abuse at small-town fire department

A firefighter is speaking out about the racism, discrimination and harassment he's allegedly suffered from co-workers and supervisors over the course of several years.

Randy Narine, 41, who joined Shelburne's volunteer fire department in 2015, says he was the first person who is a visible minority to serve in the department.

Narine, who is West Indian and moved to Canada from Trinidad and Tobago at age 10, said his hiring was difficult to accept for some firefighters at the department, which is predominantly Caucasian.

He alleges he was subjected to racist comments right from his first day in uniform.

Narine, who is also a full-time firefighter with the Brampton department, vividly recalls the day he introduced himself to his Shelburne colleagues outside the fire hall's bay doors. It was immediately clear he was the only person of colour.

Then one of the firefighters allegedly expressed disbelief the department "hired a N-word," Narine said.

Workplace Sexual Harassment: Reporting options

Sexual harassment occurs at work, often without acknowledgement, and leaves workers with lasting impacts. It creates unsafe and unproductive workplaces.

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct, comment, gesture, or contact that is gender-related or sexual in nature that makes the recipient feel uncomfortable, unsafe, offended, or humiliated. It is often coercive and emotionally abusive. It does not matter whether the behaviour was intentional or not.

The 2017 #MeToo movement brought much-needed awareness to the issue. Workers around the globe shared their experiences and the trauma they endured from sexual harassment and violence. While workplace sexual harassment is maybe not talked about as much as it was in 2017–2018, it is still very much an issue that plagues workplaces.

Experiencing Sexual Harassment

A 2020 Statistics Canada report found that one-quarter of women and one-sixth of men reported having personally experienced inappropriate sexualized behaviours in their workplace. We know that offences related to sexual violence often go unreported, thus we suspect this number is much higher.

Workplace sexual harassment has significant impacts on both the worker and employer. Sexual harassment is traumatic to experience and has both physical and mental health impacts on the survivor. They may become absent from work more often to avoid the harassment, leading to both financial and productivity costs for the employer. The survivor may also go on leave or change jobs, which can contribute to career costs for the employee. The Alberta Human Rights Commission suggests “sexual harassment in the workplace can be costly for employers in terms of financial costs and employee morale, especially for employers who do not have an effective sexual harassment policy and who do not treat such complaints seriously”.

Tackling gender-based violence in the workplace to reduce barriers for women in trades

Despite successful efforts to recruit women for skilled trades in recent years, retaining them remains a challenge.

That's why a Hamilton non-profit has partnered with a local trade union to make this male-dominated sector safer for — and more attractive to — women.

Interval House of Hamilton (IHOH), which provides shelter and services for abused women as well as violence prevention training, has partnered with LIUNA in a new program to enable workers to identify and intervene in harassment toward women in the workplace.

“Lots of women want to go into the trades,” said Sue Taylor, IHOH’s executive director. “Recruitment is there, retention is a problem.”

Women make up about half of the Canadian workforce, but accounted for just seven per cent of jobs in trades, transportation and machinery operation in 2022, according to Statistics Canada — a number that, despite the sector’s efforts to attract women to the profession, is growing at a sluggish pace.

Man charged after allegedly punching B.C. hospital worker

On Thursday night, Michel Brown was working as a care aide in the triage waiting room at Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops when she heard a man swearing.

Brown asked the man not to swear.

She says the man got up to leave, and when he passed her, he turned around and allegedly punched her in the face.

"I was in complete shock," said Brown, who has worked at the hospital for more than a year. "I had been sworn at many times, but I've never been punched in the face."

Kamloops RCMP confirmed Camille Gauthier has been charged with two counts of assault and one count of wilfully resisting or obstructing a peace officer.

An off-duty officer was in the waiting room and was able to detain a man until Kamloops police officers arrived, according to a statement from the RCMP.

Handling workplace investigations in remote and hybrid work

Investigating potential incidents of bullying, harassment or abuse in the workplace has become more complex and nuanced since the pandemic.

With more employees opting to work in hybrid models, how HR leaders identify and deal with these issues has become paramount – with the “duty to inquire” taking centre stage.

With so many pending employment law changes and updates, HRD is hosting our annual Employment Law Masterclass Vancouver – an exclusive event designed to bring busy HR professionals all the latest law developments across the province.

And the issue of handling workplace investigations is, as mentioned, top of our agenda. Speaking at the Summit, Victoria Merritt, associate at Dentons Canada LLP, will be hosting a session on best practice when handling harassment allegation in remote and hybrid work. During this talk, Merritt will discuss:

Guidelines for investigating incidents and reports of bullying and harassment among hybrid and in-office workers

Who should carry out investigations? Should the investigator be in-house or outsourced?

Best practices for conducting investigations into emails, IM histories, and social media

Doctor who accused NOSM staff of sexual harassment loses defamation suit

A doctor who made high-profile sexual harassment accusations against two doctors at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine has lost a defamation suit.

Dr. Anahita Safavi-Naini took the unusual step of hiring a publicist in 2018 to push her case to the media, even sending out a news release.

Safavi-Naini was a medical resident in the internal medicine training program at NOSM in 2018 when she alleged she was sexually harassed.

To investigate, the medical school hired Katherine Montpetit, a senior investigator with expertise in sexual violence and sexual harassment investigations with the law firm Rubin Thomlinson LLP.

“The complaints primarily concerned Dr. Stephane Gauthier, the North Bay site director of NOSM’s internal medicine program at the time of the complaints, but also raised concerns about Dr. Scott Shulman, a NOSM faculty member,” said the court transcript of the case in the Ontario Court of Appeal.

Should you date your coworker?

People are busy. With long work weeks, school, and other activities, work-life balance for young professionals has been taking a hit. In the quest for love, busy schedules could hamper people's ability to meet new people. As a result, they may often turn to meeting people at their workplace.

Dating a coworker, while not against the law, could have several professional and personal implications. Nonetheless, such office romances are becoming increasingly common.

A common occurrence: According to Vault's 2017 Office Romance survey, 57 per cent of respondents had engaged in a workplace romance of some sort, with one in 10 saying that they met their spouse at work.

While younger people are more likely to be happily single, significant dating trends like this may still be true for our own generation since many people will have their network largely based on their workplace. After all, if you are spending 40 hours a week somewhere, you might as well take the time to meet the people you spend long hours with.

The main appeal of dating someone in your workplace is that it is an easy and natural way to meet new people. Global News reported in 2019 that a survey by Report Linker found that 27 per cent of US adults look for potential dates at work. The physical proximity at work and the "mere-exposure effect" — a psychological phenomenon where simply being around someone often makes it more likely that we will like them — are some explanations for why we might fall for coworkers, in the same way that classmates might catch feelings for each other.

Toronto Mayor John Tory Resigning: Are Workplace Relationships Legal?

John Tory is resigning as mayor of Toronto after a Toronto Star report revealed that the third-term politician had a months-long relationship with a former member of his staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Multiple news outlets claim that the 68-year-old submitted his resignation letter to the city clerk on Feb. 15. Tory is set to step down at 5 p.m. on Feb. 17.

The formal resignation comes a few days after Tory held a news conference to address the situation.

On Feb. 10, the outgoing mayor told reporters:

“I did not meet the standards to which I hold myself as mayor and as a family man.”

“I recognize that permitting this relationship to develop was a serious error in judgement on my part.”

“While I deeply regret having to step away from a job that I love, in a city that I love even more... it is best to commit myself to the work that is required to repair these most important relationships.”

Tory has asked the City of Toronto’s integrity commissioner to look into the relationship.

Former IIO investigators complain of bullying in 'hostile work environment'

The head of British Columbia's Independent Investigations Office says hiring and retaining qualified investigators has been challenging, which has hampered the agency's ability to complete investigations in a timely manner.

Earlier this month, Chief Civilian Director of the IIO Ron MacDonald, blamed the problem on inadequate compensation packages at the province's civilian police watchdog.

Since then, several former IIO employees, including some investigators, have reached out to CTV News with a much different characterization of what is happening within the organization.

CTV News has agreed not to identify the former employees by name because they fear professional repercussions for speaking out against their former employer.

One former investigator provided CTV News with a copy of a letter that was submitted anonymously to then Deputy Attorney General Richard Fyfe in May of 2021, which outlines a number of concerns.

Halifax police officer alleges workplace harassment in complaint against union

When Const. Susan Conrad became the first woman to join the K-9 unit, Halifax Regional Police publicly celebrated her promotion.

“She’s been a valued member of Halifax Regional Police for almost 13 years, serving in Patrol and Community Relations & Crime Prevention,” the police posted on Facebook in June 2020.

“This is truly a historic day for our team!”

Conrad was the subject of a profile on CTV Atlantic, telling reporter Natasha Pace she’d dreamed of the job since she first started training to be a cop.

“There’s been so many females before me, decades before me that have gone through challenges and hurdles, you know, paving the way for people like me to make it a much more welcoming environment and I’m really experiencing that,” Conrad said.

“The guys on the team right now have been incredible, they’ve been so supportive and encouraging and so for me, to be able to lay a little bit of that pavement for the girls coming behind me is just, icing on the cake.”

Regina union local involved in legal action regarding compensation for workplace harassment

A union member who alleges she was harassed while working for the City of Regina has been reportedly barred from seeking compensation under the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code through arbitration.

And now, she and her union are challenging the decision responsible, from the Saskatchewan Workers Compensation Board (WCB), in court — a decision the union local president feels will have serious implications for Saskatchewan workers, if it's left to stand.

“The inability to seek any compensation under the Code, even where a serious violation can be established, completely undermines a critical tool to combat workplace discrimination in the City,” CUPE Local 21 president Laird Williamson wrote in an affidavit, attached to a partially redacted version of the court file made available to the Leader-Post.

The court challenge comes by way of an originating application. CUPE Local 21, whose members do a variety of jobs characterized within documents as “outside work,” along with the member referred to in the documents as “Jane Doe,” have brought the application against the City and the WCB.

According to the the union's application, in 2017, Jane Doe filed a WCB claim, which was accepted after medical assessments “substantiated” that she was suffering from two psychological disorders.

Unifor media workers honoured at CJFE gala for fighting back against harassment

Three women journalists, two of whom are Unifor members, were recognized tonight at the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression gala in Toronto for their brave efforts to fight back against misogyny and their online abusers.

This year's Tara Singh Hayer Award was presented to Toronto Star podcast co-host and producer Saba Eitizaz and Global News political reporter Rachel Gilmore, both Unifor members, and The Hill Times journalist Erica Ifill.

"We are honouring three kick-ass journalists who have faced intense harassment and violence for merely doing their jobs," said Unifor's National President Lana Payne in her speech, introducing the award winners.

"Three courageous women have stood up to the trolls, the attacks, the vicious threats and daily harassment and violence in order to defend freedom of the press. They deserve not only our admiration, but our collective action and support. When a journalist faces harassment, we know what's really at play is the will to silence them. But silencing them and the truth they carry is something for which we cannot stand."

Tory revelation a reminder of need for workplace relationship policies: experts

As Toronto Mayor John Tory prepares to step down after admitting to an inappropriate relationship with a former staffer, experts say preparation is key to protect both employees and employers from the risks created by such relationships.

There are no laws in Canada against workplace relationships, so it comes down to company policies to set ground rules, says Lior Samfiru, national co-managing partner at Samfiru Tumarkin LLP.

Guidance about relationships between subordinates and supervisors is especially important because of the inherent power imbalances involved, which can open the possibility that actions may fall under human rights laws.

The moment there's an imbalance of power, there's a presumption under the law that the relationship is not fully consensual. "Really all it would take is for the subordinate to say that was not consensual, even though it may have gone on for a while. . . . There would be complete liability under human rights laws for the manager, which is why a relationship like that is so problematic and risky."

Angela Caputo wants crackdown on harassment by municipal leaders

Angela Caputo, who joined city council in November representing Ward 3, is wasting no time trying to enact change.

Coun. Caputo has drafted three resolutions on the agenda for Tuesday's city council meeting, including one aimed at making municipal leaders comply with workplace violence and harassment policies.

The following is the full text of her three resolutions:

Support for Bill 5 – Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act

Mover: Coun. A. Caputo

Seconder: Coun. L. Vezeau-Allen

Whereas municipally elected leaders do not have an appropriate accountability structure when it comes to perpetrating violence and harassment in the workplace; and....

City council to talk about Bill 5; so that they can't harass each other

In an resolution that will be coming to Tuesday's city council meeting, it wants to support Bill 5, which is a document that more simply put, seeks to protect city government from one another.

Bill 5, which is called Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act has been supported by 20 municipalities to date and the City wants the Sault to be another on the list.

Supporting the Bill would require city councillors to comply with the workplace violence and harassment policies of the municipality they represent, and to direct the Integrity Commissioner to apply to the court to vacate a member's seat for failing to comply with the municipality's workplace violence and harassment policies as well as restrict officials whose seat has been vacated from seeking immediate subsequent re-election.

This would apply to all municipal officials.

John Tory quit, but did his affair break the rules? It's complicated

When he first announced his resignation just over a week ago, then-mayor John Tory admitted to “a serious error in judgment” by having an inappropriate relationship with a junior member of his staff that continued after “she decided to pursue employment outside city hall.”

The reasons why that relationship was inappropriate were not elaborated on in his statement beyond letting down his wife and family, but legal and ethics experts have pointed to the vast power gap between the mayor and an early-career female political staffer, now 31, whose job was in Tory's direct control.

Then there is the possible breach of the workplace policies that govern councillors and their staff, including restrictions on the employment of family members and partners.

Though Tory is no longer mayor as of Friday, the city's integrity commissioner, Jonathan Batty, confirmed Thursday that he will continue to investigate the relationship at Tory's request. “My office has discretion to investigate and report on matters after someone has left council,” he said in an email.

As the city awaits his findings, a tangle of city policies offer guidance on the rules of personal relationships in the workplace — and reveal areas where clarity may be needed.

Nova Scotia Barristers' Society's new advisor to work on equity, access plan

The director of the African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent (ANSDPAD) Coalition is taking on a new role at the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society.

On Wednesday, the society announced that Vanessa Fells was hired for the role of advisor of equity and access. The society also announced that Marla Brown will be taking on the role of director of equity and access.

“What both of those positions do is they will work closely with the executive team of the Barristers' Society, [which] helps to regulate the legal profession,” Fells said in an interview.

“It's to make sure that the legal profession is accessible and reflects all of the different equity-seeking peoples within Nova Scotia, so that whether the person is African Nova Scotian, or Indigenous, or a person with a disability, or somebody that has immigrated here from another country, that the legal profession understands what those challenges will be, legally, but also that they have individuals that come from all of those diverse backgrounds.”

Remote work hasn't killed the office romance, but workplace affairs are still risky

Remote work hasn't killed the office romance, but colleagues tempted to fall into each other's arms might want to think twice about the consequences.

One in three employees say they've started an office romance while working remotely over the past three years, according to a survey of workers in the United States by ResumeBuilder.com. Of those, 23 per cent say the relationship was with a co-worker. People also admit to sparking romances with clients, suppliers and investors.

Men are the lead instigators of such workplace pairings, with 45 per cent saying they've initiated a relationship compared to 25 per cent of women. What's more, it's the boss who's most likely to make the first move. In relationships between co-workers, almost half are between managers and their direct reports, the survey found.

"Those in leadership positions often feel freer to engage in romantic relationships," Stacie Haller, chief career adviser at ResumeBuilder.com, said in a blog posting accompanying the results. "The reason being, they have more control over their position within the organization opposed to lower-level employees who could suffer repercussions."

Of course, a manager who pursues a relationship with a subordinate risks career shocks of their own. Just last week, John Tory resigned as the mayor of Toronto after his affair with a former staffer made headlines. The consensual relationship, which began in 2020 and continued after the woman found another job outside the mayor's office, ended early this year. But that wasn't enough to save Tory from leaving his job.

"I recognize that permitting this relationship to develop was a serious error in judgment on my part," he said at a press conference on Feb. 10, when he announced his decision to step down.

Bullying not limited to youth

Pink Shirt Day is an annual school event to combat bullying, but as any adults know, that kind of bad behaviour doesn't end when high school is over.

In the workplace, bullying can take many forms, and the Government of Nunavut's human resources department strives to prevent and resolve conflicts as they arise.

"The Government of Nunavut is committed to a workplace founded in Inuit societal values, which means providing a safe and respectful workplace free from all forms of harassment for all its employees," said Arijana Haramincic, assistant deputy minister of human resources for the territory.

She explained that the term 'bullying' falls under the wider definition of harassment, which itself can take several forms.

Abuse of authority is one, and it's when an employee uses power or authority in a management position improperly. Harassment can also include general harassment, which involves unwanted conduct, including email and social media, that violates a person's dignity and can create an intimidating, humiliating or offensive environment. Situations that fall under this must relate to prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Human Rights Act, such as race or sexual orientation, whereas personal harassment involves the same factors at play but doesn't have to be based on Human Rights Code.

Finally, sexual harassment involves unwanted sexual conduct, including email and social media, or an individual reasonably believing sexual circumstances have an impact on their job.

"All those forms can be both direct or indirect, and we would investigate regardless of the form," explained Haramincic.

Non-disclosure agreements can be abused. We need new limits on them

In the acclaimed television series *Severance*, employees of a fictional biotechnology corporation are subject to a medical procedure that separates their memories of their work and personal lives.

The severance procedure ensures that employees don't reveal anything that happens at work to the outside world, thereby protecting corporate secrets but leaving employees vulnerable to all manner of abuse.

Thankfully, corporations in the real world don't possess any such sophisticated medical technology. But they do employ its legal equivalent — a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) — that can and has been used to sever from the public consciousness any knowledge of wrongdoing that occurs within an organization.

Originally intended as a means of protecting confidential information such as trade secrets, NDAs have been distorted beyond recognition. Now frequently used as a sword rather than a shield, the agreements have prevented whistleblowers and victims from speaking out about misconduct, including sexual assault, harassment and discrimination.

Recent examples aren't hard to find. Disgraced Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein and the Weinstein Company used NDAs to silence multiple women he sexually abused. Closer to home, Hockey Canada relied on the agreements in sexual assault settlements, and dropped one agreement only the day before executives testified in front of a parliamentary committee investigating an assault allegation.

Consequently, the Canadian Bar Association recently passed a resolution to advocate restricting NDAs to their original purpose — protecting trade secrets — and called on all levels of government to enact legislative changes to protect victims and whistleblowers.

Canada ratifies convention to end workplace harassment, violence

Workplace violence is rampant in Canada. A 2022 study found that nearly one in two workers in Canada have experienced sexual harassment and violence in the last two years.

Overall, the national data from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and partners showed seven-in-10 workers have experienced some form of harassment and violence at work.

But the workers who bore the brunt of the abuse in the workplace proved to be the same marginalized groups who face employment discrimination and precarious employment: Indigenous workers, racialized workers, workers with disabilities, and workers in the 2SLGBTQI+ all face more and different kinds of harassment and violence at work.

That's why Canada ratifying International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Convention 190 to eliminate harassment and violence in the workplace marks a major step forward for the rights of workers.

Canada is the 25th country to ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention of 2019. The federal government has the option to denounce the convention after 10 years.

Regina city workers union looks to overturn WCB workplace sexual harassment decision

CUPE 21 is looking to overturn a decision made involving the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) and the City of Regina regarding seeking damages due to workplace sexual harassment.

"It's problematic on a number of fronts from my perspective and obviously from others as well," said Jill Arnott, executive director for the Regina Women's Centre.

The union filed an application with the Court of King's Bench to reverse the decision, saying that the WCB agreed with the city's request that workers are barred from seeking money in regards to section 40 of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

Arnott said this stemmed from one situation, but noted that the city's own harassment policy says remedies can be obtained through the human rights code.

"This policy does not restrict or inhibit the right of employees to access other remedies available through the collective bargaining agreements, The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, The Saskatchewan Employment Act, Workers' Compensation Board, Saskatchewan Labour, or from seeking independent legal advice," the City of Regina's harassment policy reads.

Drama queens: Stamping out toxic behaviour before it kills your culture

What does high school and HR have in common? Drama queens – or rather perfecting the art of dealing with them.

Bonnie Low-Kramen, TEDx speaker and renowned workplace author, tells HRD that drama queens are the epitome of toxic inter-colleague conflict, with underhand behaviors and sly digs much more common than you might think.

In fact, a survey from Robert Half, cited on LinkedIn, found that nearly 60% of employees says dealing with difficult colleagues is a necessary evil in order to progress in their careers.

But how do you spot one of these toxic co-workers? Well, there's a few common, if not cringey, phrases: "How could you be so stupid?" "Did you leave your brain at home today?" "You know we can't do XYZ."

These are all classic examples of toxic, dramatic behaviour at work, according to Low-Kramen. She tells HRD that other examples include ostracizing a colleague, leaving them out of a social gathering, sending a nastygram email that includes disparaging language, or micromanaging.