



VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE REGULATION

CAMPAIGN

LOBBY KIT

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE REGULATION CAMPAIGN

Violence in the Workplace

Violence is an act of aggression which produces damaging or hurtful results. This encompasses all forms of physical violence such as grabbing, punching, kicking, stabbing, and shooting. Verbal, emotional and psychological abuse that some people engage in, and others are subjected to, every day of their lives are acts of violence. Bullying and acts intended to humiliate workers are also acts of violence which can result in psychological injuries or escalate to physical violence if not dealt with early.

Violence takes many forms, and operates at different levels. Some injure workers physically, others psychologically. For more information on violence in the workplace see the WHSC factsheet *Workplace Violence: Beyond the Physical*.

As far back as 1950 the Joint ILO/WHO Committee on Occupational Health defined occupational health as: *the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations...* A half century later Canadian society still has a long way to go to meet these goals.

In some cases domestic violence can follow a worker into the workplace to become violence in the workplace. These acts of violence are typically committed by men against women. Frontline workers who provide services in health care, education, and social services are predominantly women and therefore it is predominately women who become the victims of violence in these sectors. It is in these same sectors that the employers try to convince workers that violence is just a part of the job. Workers and their unions have argued that violence is not a part of our job description.

Violence Awareness Days

There are a number of days throughout the year that can be used as opportunities to raise awareness on the issue of violence in the workplace and help change the way we, as a society, think about the issue.

March 8th - International Women's Day <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/iwd/>

April 28th - Annual Day of Mourning for Workers who have been killed or injured at work

November 25th - Annual International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women <http://www.oaith.ca/>

December 6th - National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

The White Ribbon campaign runs from Nov. 25 to Dec. 6 each year <http://www.whiteribbon.ca/>

The sample letter to the editor provided in this kit can be modified and used to continue to raise awareness on the issue. Letters to the editor have a better chance of getting printed if they are tied to a current event such as one of the days listed above or when a violent act in a local workplace makes the news.

Awareness to Action

Unfortunately, awareness is not enough to convince employers to implement the interventions needed to protect workers from violent acts. If voluntary measures worked, we would already see these interventions in every workplace across Ontario.

In Ontario it is time to move from awareness to action. Our message to this government must be loud and clear,

“Support a Violence in the Workplace Regulation.”

The OFL Campaign

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) is organizing to put pressure on the Ontario government to introduce a violence in the workplace regulation.

This kit is designed to assist you in the lobby of Liberal MPPs. If your riding is not represented by a Liberal, you can write directly to the Minister of Labour.

- ✓ Use the phone script as a guide to contact your MPP by phone and let them know you want them to support a violence in the workplace regulation.
- ✓ Use the sample letter as a guide to write or email your MPP to pressure them into supporting a violence in the workplace regulation.
- ✓ Arrange a face-to-face meeting of your Liberal MPP at their constituency office. MPPs are usually in the ridings on Fridays and weekends, during the constituency weeks in May and November and when the legislature is not sitting. The constituency weeks are generally tied to the March break, the Victoria Day long weekend and Remembrance Day. For 2006 the legislature is scheduled to resume sitting February 13th until March 2nd with constituency weeks starting March 13th, May 22nd and November 6th so your MPP may also be available then. The complete schedule can be found online at <http://www.ontla.on.ca/documents/index.htm>.

Always follow-up the face-to-face meeting with a letter thanking the MPP for meeting with you and re-emphasising the issue. It is also very important to be sure that people in the riding write and call the MPP on the issue before you make your appointment. The MPP needs to know that this is an issue to be taken seriously. If the MPP has not heard from anyone else why should you and your concern be taken seriously?

LOBBYING

Introduction

Lobbying is the process of trying to influence decision-makers. It is as old as politics itself and just as legitimate. Lobbying can be carried out as a small group or an individual, either through meetings, letter writing, phone calls or brief presentation.

All politicians can and should be lobbied. It is their duty to know what their constituents think and acquaint themselves with all sides of an issue. Those who are friendly to your position may give you more time. However, even those opposed can be affected by a direct show of community support for an issue.

You don't have to be an expert to lobby a politician. Concentrate more on the effect of the issue in your community. Stick to the community/personal side of the issue – that's the area where you are the expert.

Remember politicians are people. They have the same hopes, fears, dreams and failings as the rest of us. Generally, they want to get re-elected.

LOBBYING - GENERAL GUIDELINES

Fears About Lobbying Politicians

Many of us believe politicians know more than we do or they wouldn't be in decision-making positions. We think we aren't articulate enough or that we'll freeze when we approach the politicians. Maybe they'll ask questions we can't answer.

Often, we forget that the politician's job is to serve us. That's why they get elected to office. We forget that it's us – the voters – who hold the power.

Once you start meeting the politicians you'll see the "mystery" that surrounds them quickly fades. They're just ordinary people who come from a variety of backgrounds. They're often very responsive to the voters – the people who can affect their future.

Many of our fears about lobbying can be addressed by looking at some groups who have lobbied government on issues that touch the average citizen. Who were their members? What made them credible spokespersons? Can we see any similarities between them and our attempts to organize a lobby?

If we look, for example, at the lobby formed several years ago to fight against the de-indexation of pensions, we see that the members of this lobby group were average senior citizens who had credibility as lobbyists because the pension issue directly affected their lives.

It's Not a Waste of Time

Another obstacle to lobbying is the view that it's a waste of time, that we, alone, can't make a difference. But if our voices aren't heard, then our opponents will be the only group to get the ear of the decision-makers.

Even if we don't directly see or speak to the politician because he or she is avoiding us, they do get the message that the issue is important to the community.

There are three stages for a successful lobby campaign:

1. Develop support by publicizing the issue within your organization and/or the community.
2. Decide the kind of lobby – face-to-face meeting with the politicians, phone or letter (or a combination of all three).
3. Take action.

FACE-TO-FACE LOBBY

TIPS FOR AN IN-PERSON LOBBY:

Arrange a Pre-Lobby Meeting

Members of your lobby delegation should meet beforehand to discuss what you're going to say.

Plan the Agenda

Decide what you want to discuss and the points you want to make. Practice making your pitch. If you are lobbying in a group, choose a spokesperson and a recorder.

Know Your Audience

Keep your politician's interests in mind. Example, pay equity – cutting women's incomes reduces spending in the local community. Some politicians will be genuinely interested in maintaining a strong pay equity law. Others will be concerned with their own interest. Making the point of the impact on the community does work. Remember, stick to your subject. Your goal is to persuade the politician to support your position.

Know Your Subject

Anticipate questions and arguments and be prepared to respond. Don't be afraid to say you don't know the answer to some points – offer to get back with information and be sure you follow through.

Review Information

Review the material and any fact sheets you have.

Stick to What You Know

The best way to deal with the issue when talking to a politician is to talk from your own experience – why this issue is important to you, your family, or your community.

Be Clear and Concise

Don't try to cover too much ground – confine your comments to specific issues. Explain your position, and don't assume the politician understands your point of view. Speak confidently and persuasively.

Be a Good Listener

Try to determine areas of agreement. Avoid arguments and don't lecture. If the politician favours your position, ask for help in persuading his/her government.

Follow Up with More Information

Don't worry if you're asked a question you can't answer. Just get back to the politician with the information later.

Keep Control of the Meeting

Don't let the politician sidetrack you on to other issues. Politely stick to the issue at hand.

Use Your Clout in the Constituency

If possible, let the politician know the scope of the lobby. Ask other organizations and unions who live in the constituency to follow up by phone calls and letters. Even relatively small numbers of constituents visiting, calling, or writing a politician in his/her riding can be powerful. Constituents are voters who can help re-elect or defeat the MPP in the next election.

Try to Get a Commitment

Know what you're going to say and what you want from the politician before your meeting. Ideally, you want the politician to support your position. Ask her or him to soften up the other elected members of their party. If possible, try to get a commitment from the politician about what they are prepared to do.

Leave the Door Open

Try to prevent outright rejection of your position. Emphasize your areas of agreement, not your differences.

Don't Get Discouraged

Not every politician will be sympathetic or supportive. Don't allow an early disappointment to stop you from continuing to lobby this politician. Sometimes they need to hear things several times before they understand the issue, especially if they've never thought about it before. Sometimes they don't realize the importance of the issue to their constituency. **Their position on this issue means votes!**

PHONE LOBBY

POINTS TO REMEMBER FOR A SUCCESSFUL PHONE LOBBY

Numbers Count

- ▶ Ask every member of every organization to phone.
- ▶ Ask each member to get a friend to phone.

Use a Script

- ▶ Have a few people develop a script or speaking points as a guide for those doing the phoning. You can use the issue sheets from the kit to help develop your speaking points.

Speak to the Politician

- ▶ If you are “screened” leave a definite message, stating your views briefly.
- ▶ Ask the politician to get back to you.
- ▶ Follow-up with another call.

LETTER LOBBY

POINTS TO REMEMBER FOR A SUCCESSFUL LETTER LOBBY

1. Get the name and address right.
2. Identify yourself or your organization.
3. Get to the point at once.
4. Use the fact sheets from the kit to help develop your argument.
5. Personalize the issue: show how it affects the community.
6. Ask for an action or response.
7. Be clear about what you are requesting be done.
8. Keep paragraphs to no more than six lines.
9. Numbers count – get support from unions, community groups and friends.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Today's date

Annual Day of Mourning

April 28th is the Annual Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured trying to earn a living. Every year on this day in communities across this country people stop to remember those who have died and to recommit to protect the living. This day is also a means to educate the public about the causes and solutions for preventing death, injury and illness at work. Increasingly workers are being injured or killed as a result of violence in the workplace.

Violence takes many forms, and operates at different levels. Frontline workers who provide public services such as health care, education, transportation and social services are subjected to all forms of physical violence such as grabbing, punching, kicking, stabbing, and shooting. Verbal, emotional and psychological abuse that some people engage in and others are subjected to every day of their lives are acts of violence. In some cases domestic violence can follow a worker into the workplace to become violence in the workplace. Bullying and acts intended to humiliate workers are also acts of violence which can result in psychological injuries or escalate to physical violence.

Many employers try to convince workers that violence is just a part of the job. Workers and their unions have argued that violence is not a part of our job description.

A violence in the workplace regulation would require that employers evaluate their workplace for the risk of violence and take action to minimize or eliminate that risk.

British Columbia and Saskatchewan have already led the way by implementing violence regulations which have helped to protect workers in those provinces. The federal government is moving forward to develop a violence in the workplace regulation to protect federally regulated workers. If you feel that workers in Ontario deserve to be protected by the same type of regulations, then please contact your MPP to let them know.

Your name, address and phone number (Editors often want your number to confirm the letter before printing it.)

Sample Phone Scripts for Calling MPP Constituency Offices

On reaching a live person:

“Hello my name is I would like to speak to (name of your MPP).”

The person answering the phone will likely state that the MPP is not available right now and ask the reason for your call.

“I am calling because I’m very concerned about the lack of legislation to protect workers from violence in the workplace. I would like to know if (name of your MPP) would support the introduction of a violence in the workplace regulation that would require employers to protect working people from being injured at work.”

It is not necessary to use this exact wording. You do need to make your concern clear and ask for a commitment for a violence in the workplace regulation.

Use the background information to prepare some points that are important to you, just in case the MPP or his/her staff are willing to have a short discussion with you.

If the MPP is not available, ask when he/she will be, or request that he/she calls you back. Be polite but persistent.

On reaching voice mail or the answering machine:

“Hello my name is I am calling because I’m very concerned about the lack of a violence in the workplace regulation. I would like to know if (name of your MPP) would support the introduction of a regulation that would require that workers be protected from violence in the workplace. I would like (name of your MPP) to call me back at (your phone number).

Thank you. Good bye.”

It is important, when leaving a message, to keep it short as most systems will have a time limit for messages and will stop recording or disconnect when the time is up.

If no one from the MPP’s office returns your call, phone back. Be calm and polite but leave another message pointing out when you called before, that this issue is important to you and that you would like to have your call returned. If the MPP or someone from the office calls back, thank him/her and try to get a commitment that the MPP will support a violence in the workplace regulation.

Sample Letter to Your MPP

Today's date

Name of MPP

Constituency Address

Dear (name of politician):

I am contacting you as my provincial representative because I'm very concerned about the lack of violence in the workplace legislation in Ontario. I'm writing to ensure that you would support the introduction of violence in the workplace regulations to protect working people from being injured at work.

Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act was introduced 25 years ago, long before most people recognized violence as a preventable workplace hazard. This hazard has led to increasing numbers of workers suffering injury from violent acts. For many workers, this has resulted in permanent disabilities, preventing those affected from working or leading normal lives. The reasons for these increases are as varied as the workplaces in which they occur. The bottom line is that there are steps that employers can take to prevent these injuries.

British Columbia and Saskatchewan have already led the way by implementing regulations which have helped to protect workers in those provinces. The Federal government is working on a violence in the workplace regulation to protect federally regulated workers. Workers in Ontario deserve to be protected by the same type of regulations.

I ask that you respond and tell me if you support protecting workers from injury with violence in the workplace regulations.

Yours truly,

Signature

Your name and address

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