

WORKPLACE BULLYING

Position statement by the
New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women
March 2007

Issue

Workplace bullying is an internationally recognized occupational health and safety issue and a major cause of workplace stress. It carries heavy costs for the targets – more likely to be women than men - as well as for businesses, organizations and society.

Our human rights and employment laws currently offer little protection against workplace bullying and few employers have general anti-harassment policies. A growing number of citizens, researchers, and health care and human resources professionals are calling for action to address this problem.

Background

Nature and impact:

- Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour that intimidates or humiliates an employee or group of employees.¹

The International Labour Organization (ILO) considers bullying a type of workplace violence. Bullying at work – also referred to as psychological harassment, workplace harassment, emotional abuse or mobbing - can take various forms:²

- insulting remarks or spreading rumours about a person's appearance, habits, ideas or private life.
- harsh and constant criticism of work in front of others, withholding of information or resources needed to do the job, removing responsibilities or setting impossible deadlines as punishment.
- use of the silent treatment to isolate the target and encouraging others to turn against the victim.
- co-workers ganging up to torment a fellow employee – a practice sometimes called “mobbing” – and eventually to force them out of their job.

¹ See for example the definitions presented in European Agency for Safety and Health at work, Fact sheet 23 on Bulling at work (2002), at <http://osha.eu.int/publications/factsheets/23?language=en>

² “Workplace bullying” is the term used most frequently in Canada, the UK and Australia. In Scandinavia and Germany speaking countries, this behaviour is referred to as “mobbing.” “Workplace harassment” or “emotional abuse” are commonly used in the U.S. , “psychological harassment/*harcèlement psychologique*” in Quebec and *harcèlement moral* in France and Belgium. Helge Hoel, Kate Sparks & Cary L. Cooper, *The Costs of Violence/Stress at Work and the Benefits of a Violence/Stress-Free Working Environment*, Report commissioned by the ILO, Geneva (2001), p. 18-19, at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/violence/costof.htm>; ILO, Safework, Introduction to violence at work (2000) at www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/violence/intro.htm

- The bully may be a manager, a supervisor or a co-worker, a client, a supplier or even a visitor to the workplace. When teachers are bullied by parents, workers by bosses, or a salesperson by a supplier, it's workplace bullying.
- Studies suggest women and men are about equally represented among the bullies. But women are more likely than men to be targets.³
- The target of bullying may suffer from serious and often long-term physical and mental health problems including anxiety and depression, insomnia, loss of appetite and concentration, reduced self-esteem, digestive disorders and increased alcohol and drug use. Other consequences may include social isolation, family tensions and financial problems due to absences or quitting/being fired.
 - Women who participated in a recent pilot study (5 N.B. women in 2005) conducted by a University of New Brunswick Faculty of Nursing research team said the experience of workplace bullying left them feeling diminished, disillusioned and unsupported.⁴ Over time, it also forced them to take control of their own health and distance themselves from work.
- Employers also pay a high cost, including increased absenteeism and staff turnover. Low morale also reduces productivity and effectiveness, not only among the direct targets of bullying. Other employees are also demoralized and may be driven out by the negative climate at work.
- A report commissioned by the International Labour Organization in 2001 estimated the costs to society of bullying, sexual harassment and physical violence at work – medical costs, benefits and welfare related to premature retirement as well as potential loss of productive workers – together accounted for between 1% and 3.5% of GDP.⁵
- Harassers, on the other hand, rarely pay a price for their behaviour. A 2003 survey of 1,000 self-described bullying victims by the U.S.-based Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute found that in 70% of cases, the bullying only stopped when the victim quit or was fired. In another 17% of cases, the victim was transferred to another position with the same employer. The bully suffered consequences in only 13% of cases: 4% received punishment or sanctions, 9% were transferred or fired.⁶

³ Gary Namie, The Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute 2003 Report on Abusive Workplaces (October 2003), at <http://www.bullyinginstitute.org/res.html>; Communication with Dr. Judy MacIntosh, UNB Faculty of Nursing, May 11, 2006.

⁴ Judy MacIntosh, Judy Wuest and Marilyn Merritt-Gray, "Impact of Work Place Bullying on Women's Health Promotion," presentation at UNB Faculty of Nursing Research Day, Fredericton, April 28, 2006. The Fredericton team, led by Dr. Judy MacIntosh, has received funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for a 3-year project (2006-2009) to investigate the impact of workplace bullying on how women take care of their health. The project may also shed some light on how WPB influences women's participation in the workforce, on whether there are similarities and differences between WPB and other abuse experiences and on the repercussions of accumulated abuse no matter the form of victimization.

⁵ Helge Hoel, Kate Sparks & Cary L. Cooper, *The Costs of Violence/Stress at Work and the Benefits of a Violence/Stress-Free Working Environment*, Report commissioned by the ILO, Geneva (2001), p. 20-21, at www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/violence/costof.htm

⁶ Gary Namie, The Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute 2003 Report on Abusive Workplaces (October 2003), at www.bullyinginstitute.org/res.html

Prevalence of the problem:

- Researcher Marilyn Noble of Fredericton has said that workplace bullying is "at the stage family violence was about 20 years ago. It has been around for a long time but suddenly we've put a name on it and we've made it discussable. There is a huge pent-up need to deal with it."⁷
- Bullying is far more common than sexual harassment or racial discrimination.⁸
- Aggression of a psychological nature is also more widespread than the acts of physical aggression and even murders in the workplace that have received considerable media attention, notably in the U.S. (ie postal worker rage).⁹
- While some evidence suggests that Canada has one of the highest rates of assaults at work in the world, comparative data on the extent of psychological harassment is not available.¹⁰
- Of the 640 employed respondents who participated in a 2004 Quebec-wide survey on psychological harassment in the workplace, 7% said they had been isolated from others by an individual or a group, 7% said they had been put down or ridiculed in front of others and 9% said they had been victims of offensive, threatening or degrading remarks.¹¹
- A study of available survey data on the prevalence of workplace bullying in various European countries concluded in 2001 that at least 10% of workers (total, female and male) are currently subjected to bullying.¹²

Recourses currently available in New Brunswick:

- Some employers have anti-harassment policies. Government of New Brunswick public service guidelines, for example, address personal and sexual harassment, poisoned work environment and abuse of authority.¹³

⁷ Cited in Chris Morris, "Workplace Bullying moves to forefront", July 14, 2004, at <http://jobboomcc.canoe.ca/News/2004/07/14/1225613-sun.html>

⁸ Canada Safety Council, "Targeting Workplace Bullies" at www.safety-council.org/info/OSH/bully-law.html

⁹ Helge Hoel, Kate Sparks & Cary L. Cooper, *The Costs of Violence/Stress at Work and the Benefits of a Violence/Stress-Free Working Environment*, Report commissioned by the ILO, Geneva (2001), p. 6, available at www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/violence/costof.htm

¹⁰ An international victimization survey of 32 countries in 1996 showed that 3.9% of the Canadian women and 5% of the Canadian men surveyed compared to 1% of the U.S. women and 4% of the U.S. men surveyed said they were assaulted at work in the past year. The Western European average was 3.6% for women and the same for men. Almost 10% of Canadian women reported to the same survey that they were victims of "sexual incidents", compared to 5% of U.S. women and 7% of Western European women. ILO, *Violence at Work – A Global Problem* (1998 press release for report) at www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/pr/1998/30.htm; see also Joanne D. Leck, "Violence in the Workplace: A New Challenge", *Optimum online*, vol. 31, issue 1 (November 2001) at www.optimumonline.ca/print.phtml?id=9

¹¹ Chair in Occupational Health and Safety Management at Université Laval, "Violence at Work", at <http://cgsst.fsa.ulaval.ca/violence/eng/>

¹² Helge Hoel, Kate Sparks & Cary L. Cooper, *The Costs of Violence/Stress at Work and the Benefits of a Violence/Stress-Free Working Environment*, Report commissioned by the ILO, Geneva (2001), p. 20-21, available at www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/violence/costof.htm; See also European Agency for Safety and Health at work, Fact sheet 23 on Bullying at work (2002), at <http://osha.eu.int/publications/factsheets/23?language=en>

¹³ N.B. Government Harassment Policy at <http://intranet/intellinet/adminman/adminman/2913-e.asp>

- But in many workplaces, there are no established policies or procedures for employees who experience this type of harassment. Existing laws offer little protection against workplace bullying.¹⁴
- While sexual harassment is explicitly forbidden by provincial and federal human rights laws, psychological harassment is not covered unless it can be shown to be motivated by the victim's race, sex, physical disability, sexual orientation, or one of the other prohibited grounds for discrimination recognized by the N.B. *Human Rights Code* for provincially regulated workplaces or the *Canadian Human Rights Act* for federally regulated workplaces.¹⁵
- Neither is general harassment mentioned in the provincial or federal employment standards laws nor New Brunswick's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.¹⁶

Legal remedies in other jurisdictions:

- Quebec is the only province with a law, in effect since June 2004, to protect all workers from workplace bullying. "Every employee has a right to a work environment free from psychological harassment" states Quebec's labour standards act. Employers must take "reasonable action" to prevent it and must put a stop to it when they become aware of such behaviour.¹⁷
 - The Act defines psychological harassment as "any vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures that affect an employee's dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful work environment for the employee. A single serious incidence of such behaviour that has a lasting harmful effect on an employee may also constitute psychological harassment."¹⁸

¹⁴ A prominent Canadian law firm is warning employers to develop policies addressing bullying behaviours in order to avoid the litigation that has begun to emerge even without explicit legislative prohibition of the behaviour. The firm notes that Canadian courts have started to deal with the issue of psychological harassment in various ways, including the determination of whether harassment in the workplace constitutes constructive dismissal, whether an employee who suffers harassment at work is entitled to damages for intentional infliction of emotional distress, and whether damages for wrongful dismissal should be increased where psychological harassment is involved. Osler law firm web site, "Employers Face more Changes in Canadian Employment Law, www.osler.com/resources.aspx?id=10402 . See also "Bullying in the Workplace – Legalities" at www.workplaceviolence.ca/thm-bullying/legal.html

¹⁵ The N.B. HRA currently protects against discrimination and harassment based on 14 grounds: age, marital status, religion, physical disability, mental disability, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, national origin, social condition, political belief or activity, sexual orientation and sex, including pregnancy. N.B.HRA at www.gnb.ca/0062/acts/acts/h-11.htm and Frequently Asked Questions about the NB HRA at www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/faq.htm; The Canadian HRA prohibits discrimination on 11 grounds: race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability and conviction for which a pardon has been granted. CHRA, at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/H-6/index.html> and "Discrimination and Harassment" on the site of the Canadian Human Rights Commission www.chrc-cdp.ca/discrimination/harassment-en.asp

¹⁶ N.B. ESA at www.gnb.ca/acts/acts/e-07-2.htm; Canada Labour Code, including occupational health and safety provisions in Section 2, at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/L-2/>; N.B. OHSA at <http://www.gnb.ca/0062/acts/acts/o-00-2.htm>

¹⁷ Section 81.19, Labour Standards Act at www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/lois/normes/normes/harcelement.asp#harcelement

¹⁸ Section 81.18, Labour Standards Act at www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/lois/normes/normes/harcelement.asp#harcelement

- The employee or a non-profit employee's rights organization can file a written complaint with the labour standards Commission (organization can file complaint on behalf of one or more employees who consent in writing), within 90 days of the last incidence of the offending behaviour.¹⁹
 - The labour standards Commission must investigate the claim with "due dispatch."
 - A mediator can be appointed at any stage in any case, with the agreement of the parties. The Commission can assist and advise the employee during mediation.
 - If the complaint is founded and mediation fails, Quebec employers can be ordered to offer compensation and support, including reinstating the employee, modifying the disciplinary record of the employee, paying lost wages and punitive and moral damages and paying for the psychological support needed by the employee for a "reasonable" period of time.
 - Employees covered by a collective agreement must use the recourses provided for in the agreement, as available, to seek enforcement of the LSA provisions on psychological harassment. The parties can request the appointment of a mediator. Provincial government employees not covered by a collective agreement must use the available recourse before the Quebec public service commission to get enforcement of the LSA provisions.
- A private members' bill that would have added explicit protection against psychological harassment in federal government workplaces to the *Canada Labour Code* died in the House of Commons in 2004. The **proposed amendment to federal labour standards legislation** included a definition of psychological harassment and other provisions similar to those introduced in Quebec. It also provided for the imposition of fines of up to \$10,000 on supervisors or managers (or any other person having authority over an employee) who take retaliation against an employee who has reported psychological harassment.²⁰
 - The **Ontario** Legislature gave first reading in December 2005 to a bill that would add protection against "workplace-related harassment" to its occupational health and safety act.
 - "Workplace-related harassment" is defined in the Ontario bill as "harassment by a worker's employer or supervisor or by another worker, whether or not the harassment occurs at the workplace, or harassment that has the effect of interfering with the performance or safety of any worker at the workplace or that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment for any worker."²¹
 - Employers would be required to protect workers from harassment in the workplace, to give workers the right to refuse to work in certain circumstances after harassment has occurred, to investigate allegations of workplace-related harassment and to take steps to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment. Employers would also be responsible for preparing guidelines for eliminating and dealing with harassment incidents and to provide compulsory, regular harassment prevention training for workers and managers.
 - Employers' responsibilities for providing redress and compensation for the victims are less clearly defined and less extensive than in the Quebec law and proposed federal

¹⁹ Enforcement procedures are outlined in sections 123.6 to 123.16 of the Act, www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/lois/normes/recours/harcelement.asp

²⁰ Bill C-451, An Act to prevent psychological harassment in the workplace and to amend the Canada Labour Code or Workplace Psychological Harassment Prevention Act by Bloc Québécois MP Diane Bourgeois, given 1st reading September 24, 2003 at www.parl.gc.ca/LEGISINFO/index.asp?Lang=E&Chamber=C&StartList=201&EndList=1000&Session=11&Type=0&Scope=I&query=3766&List=toc

²¹ *Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to Protect Workers from Harassment in the Workplace* at www.ontla.on.ca/documents/Bills/38_Parliament/session2/b045_e.htm

bill. Ontario employers must ensure that the source of the harassment is identified and the harassment stopped, that “adequate steps are taken to remedy the effects of the harassment” and must “compensate the worker for any absences from the workplace related to the harassment.”

- A **City of St John’s by-law** prohibits general harassment in the municipal workplace and now also applies to city councillors working together. The only female city councillor in St. John’s (Nfld) recently denounced the mayor’s bullying tactics, which she had endured for years. She successfully introduced an amendment to a bylaw to allow one councillor to make a complaint against another. The bylaw had been amended a dozen years ago to exempt councillors, since it was thought “aggressive” debate was part of politics.²²
- The problem of workplace bullying has attracted the attention of **labour unions** in Canada. The Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian Media Guild have recommended adding provisions prohibiting and addressing “bullying or personal harassment, also known as psychological harassment,” to the Canada Labour Code. Both favour the Quebec legislative model.²³
- The **European Commission** includes the prevention of bullying among the goals of its strategy for health and safety at work and has given direction on this to its member states.
 - In 1989, the European Commission issued a Council Directive that makes employers responsible for making sure employees do not suffer harm through work, including as a result of bullying. Member states have all implemented this Directive and some have also developed guidance on preventing bullying.
 - The European Union Parliament also passed a motion urging Member States “with a view to counteracting bullying and sexual harassment at work, to review and, if appropriate, to supplement their existing legislation and to review and standardize the definition of bullying.” It recommends that Member States ensure that effective prevention policies be put in place, procedures be developed to aid the victims and prevent any recurrence and that information and training of employees, managers, social partners and workplace health professionals be developed, in both the private and public sectors.²⁴
- A few European countries, such as **Belgium and France**, have adopted special legislation on workplace bullying.

²² The repeal of the section was voted at the April 25, 2006 Council meeting, minutes at www.stjohns.ca/cityhall/councilminutesdetail.jsp?id=269; St. John's Workplace Human Rights By-Law at www.stjohns.ca/ByLaws.nsf/wByLawNum/1315. The web site version consulted May 17, 2006, did not yet include the amendment made to section 5.8 regarding complaints by councilors against other councilors; see also “City Council takes a stand on workplace bullying”, May 11, 2006, at www.hrreporter.com/loginarea/members/viewing.asp?ArticleNo=4445

²³ See the briefs submitted to the Federal Labour Standards Review: March 2005 brief by the Canadian Labour Congress at www.fls-ntf.gc.ca/en/sub_fb_03.asp December 2005 brief by the Canadian Media Guild at www.fls-ntf.gc.ca/en/sub_fb_73.asp

²⁴ European Agency for Safety and Health at work, Fact sheet 23 on Bullying at work (2002), at <http://osha.eu.int/publications/factsheets/23?language=en>

- In 2002, a new Belgian law imposed specific obligations on employers for the prevention of psychological harassment and the promotion of the well-being of employees.²⁵
- France's Code du travail was amended in 2002 to include provisions against psychological harassment at work. Employees have a right to a harassment-free workplace and are not to suffer retaliation for reporting it, while employers are responsible for taking measures to prevent it. The same law also provided for possible criminal prosecution of harassers, with 1-year prison terms and fines.²⁶
- Other European countries address workplace bullying through regulatory responses using charters, guidelines and resolutions.²⁷
 - In 1993, Sweden's National Board of Occupational Safety and Health issued a regulation describing how employers are to prevent and deal with workplace victimization – covers problems variously labeled as adult bullying, mental violence, social rejection and harassment, including sexual harassment.²⁸
- **South Australia's occupational health and safety legislation** was amended in 2005 to recognize bullying as inappropriate behaviour towards an employee. Regional inspectors who receive complaints can refer unresolved matters on to the Industrial Commission for conciliation or mediation.²⁹
- In the **United States**, workplace bullying is not yet recognized under existing laws (unless it affects workers of "protected classes" under federal laws, ie disability, gender or race) but a few states – including California, Massachusetts, Missouri and Oregon - are considering anti-bullying, "healthy workplace" bills.³⁰

Prevention and the role of employers:

- Legal remedies to deal with bullying are not enough; prevention is also key.
- A study of the first 18 months of operation of Quebec's new law showed that most employers affected by complaints had no preventive measures in place. It estimated that approximately 20% of complaints could have been settled within the organization if some formal or informal internal mechanisms had been developed and implemented.³¹

²⁵ « Metaguide – Protection contre la violence, le harcèlement moral ou sexuel au travail » on the Belgian federal public service web site at <http://meta.fgov.be/pc/pce/pcep/frcep19.htm>; see also guide for employers, *Clés pour... prévenir et lutter contre la violence et le harcèlement moral ou sexuel au travail* (February 2005).

²⁶ See Institut national de recherche et de sécurité, « Dossier – Harcèlement moral : généralités », www.inrs.fr/hm/harcelement_moral_generalites.html

²⁷ European Agency for Safety and Health at work, Fact sheet 23 on Bullying at work (2002), at <http://osha.eu.int/publications/factsheets/23?language=en>

²⁸ See Ordinance on Victimization at work at www.av.se/inenglish/lawandjustice/provisions/

²⁹ See Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare (Safe Work SA) Amendment Act 2005, at www.safework.sa.gov.au/show_page.jsp?id=2474

³⁰ Beth Duncan, "Workplace Anti-Bullying Legislation: The Next Frontier?", March 28, 2006 on the website of the Workplace Trauma and Bullying Institute, <http://bullyinginstitute.org/studies.html> ; and see "The Healthy Workplace Bill for Oregon", at www.bullybusters.org/advocacy/legis-or.html

³¹ Angelo Soares (UQAM, Department of Organizations and Human Resources), "The Anti-Bullying Law: The Quebec Experience", at www.bullyinginstitute.org/res.html . Other studies by Soares are available at www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r13566/

- Another study of the complaints lodged with Quebec's labour standards commission in 2004-2005 showed that within the organizations, managers reacted initially to complaints by denying and trivializing the situation, while organizations generally tried to "hush up" the incidents, even in some cases firing the complainants.³²
- Authors of a large-scale British survey conducted in 2000 concluded "bullying can only thrive when it is condoned, directly or indirectly by management."³³ In fact, the survey found that 75% of the bullies were within managerial ranks. If they are to establish a work environment and work culture that is free of bullying, employers must therefore critically examine their own management practices.
- Bullying researchers and health and safety experts agree that employers must introduce internal policies and procedures not only to handle complaints and provide support to victims, but also to be watching for situations that could deteriorate. Employers must also ensure that all employees and managers are educated on the issue and made aware of the mechanisms for safe reporting and redress.³⁴
- Quebec's labour standards commission has prepared brochures to inform employees about their rights and to urge employers to take an active role in raising awareness, providing training and procedures for dealing with incidents of psychological harassment.³⁵
- Australia's Victorian WorkCover Authority, which manages the state of Victoria's workplace safety system, launched a major educational campaign in response to workplace bullying. The state authorities produced a booklet in thirteen languages to inform workers of their rights and how to deal with workplace bullying, as well as a guide for employers on how to prevent bullying and violence at work. The state authorities recently conducted workplace bullying prevention workshops for organizations.³⁶

Focus Groups

In order to determine whether current mechanisms to deal with workplace bullying are effective and to uncover other potential solutions, the Advisory Council placed the following newspaper ads in January 2007:

"Are you a woman who has been or is currently a victim of workplace bullying?
If so, we'd like to hear from you. We are organizing focus group sessions in
early February, as part of our work to develop ways to deal with this problem. If
you have been a victim of bullying at work, and are willing to give us a couple
of evening hours, please call ---.*

**Workplace bullying is usually defined as repeated, unreasonable behaviour
that intimidates or humiliates you. Examples include frequent insulting remarks,*

³² Jean-Pierre Brun and Evelyn Kedl, *Portrait et analyse de plaintes déposées pour harcèlement psychologique au travail à la Commission des normes du travail* (January 2006) at <http://cgsst.fsa.ulaval.ca/>

³³ Helge Hoel & Cary L. Cooper, *Destructive Conflict and Bullying at Work* (April 2000), at www.csren.gov.uk/UMISTreportHelgeHoel1.PDF.

³⁴ See for example, Canada Safety Council, "Targeting Workplace Bullies" at www.safety-council.org/info/OSH/bully-law.html; Jean-Pierre Brun and Evelyn Kedl, *Portrait et analyse de plaintes déposées pour harcèlement psychologique au travail à la Commission des normes du travail* (January 2006) at <http://cgsst.fsa.ulaval.ca/>; *A Call to Action – Women's Health at Work & Violence in the Workplace* at www.cwhn.ca/resources/workplace/violence.html

³⁵ "Psychological harassment at work", www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/normes/harcelement.asp

³⁶ "Workplace Bullying & Occupational Violence" at www.workcover.vic.gov.au/vwa/home.nsf/pages/b&v_intro.

constant criticism in front of others, withholding of information. The bully can be a supervisor, a co-worker, a client, a supplier or even a visitor to the workplace.

About 60 replies were received and 45 women participated in focus groups held in February 2007 in Fredericton, Saint John, Moncton and Tracadie-Sheila, along with several individual interviews. Participants evaluated the potential of different remedies, including mediation, Ombudsman, sensitivity training and social marketing campaigns.

The report, produced by consultant Bissett Matheson Communications who conducted the sessions and the interviews, is available on request. Its key findings are as follows:

- Current mechanisms that are supposed to remedy workplace bullying are not only totally ineffective, but often compound the problem.
- Participants felt the greatest shortcomings in these mechanisms is that they have no teeth, and that often the person who employees are supposed to consult for help, is part of the problem.
- There was general consensus among the English groups that an ombudsman could represent a solution; however the Francophone participants were less enthusiastic about this option.
- There was a consensus that public education has a major role to play in dealing with bullying.

Position of the N.B. Advisory Council on the Status of Women:

Workplace bullying is a serious occupational health and safety issue with far-reaching social and economic consequences. This unethical behaviour takes a heavy toll on the physical and mental health of workers, particularly women, who are overrepresented among the victims. Businesses, organizations and society as a whole also pay a high price for bullying at work.

It is important to first acknowledge and name the problem. Raising public awareness is key to making this a social rather than an individual problem. Employers must make it known that bullying will not be tolerated and victims must be given recourses.

Governments should take the lead in legislating against workplace bullying, as they have done for sexual harassment and various forms of discriminatory or health issues in the workplace. Adequate enforcement mechanisms and resources for public education must also be provided, to ensure that victims are willing and able to access protection and compensation in a timely manner.

Providing a legal definition of bullying would also help employers develop their own policies and procedures to address the problem. A firm commitment from employers is essential. An effective anti-harassment strategy in each workplace must include a pro-active approach to workplace conflicts to defuse potential harassment situations, the introduction of clear and safe reporting mechanisms, information and training for employees, supervisors and managers as well as support for victims.

Recommendations:

- Government should amend legislation to recognize workplace bullying as a workplace health issue, provide protection and assure redress for victims, including advice to victims, complaint procedures, tough penalties for employers who tolerate it and follow-up to ensure the problem is rectified.
- Government should ensure that enforcement and public education are supported by adequate human and material resources.

- Government should assist employers to develop prevention policies and codes of conduct, and to provide information and support to victims.
- As an employer, government should investigate extent of bullying in public sector and take measures to eliminate it.
- Government should launch a social marketing campaign, provide 1-800 number, web site, etc.
- The Advisory Council should conduct public campaign to raise awareness of the need for action.