

#MeToo, Bill C-65 and Harassment in the Workplace

Is your organization set up for change?



In October 2017, the hashtag #MeToo made headlines internationally, prompting women from around the world to publicly share their experiences of sexual assault or harassment. The #MeToo Movement became the turning point for many women in their fight against sexual assault and harassment. Celebrity stories that got the movement started, provided an opportunity for many women to share their stories; and social media provided the platform for these stories to be heard.

Though the hashtag originated in the US, it quickly spread to Canada. Once the #MeToo movement went viral, the number of sexual assault complaints increased dramatically.

Undoubtedly, the movement exposes an uncomfortable reality of the workplace.

These and other federal stats created a heightened sense of alarm, prompting the federal government to develop a harassment and violence in the workplace strategy for the federal sector. The centerpiece is Bill C-65, which received royal assent on October 25, 2018 and will come into force at an undecided date, as yet. Essentially, Bill C-65 outlines three main principles:



Prevention of incidents through mandatory training of employers and employees.



A robust and fair investigation process. This is a key new feature, that is now built into the occupational health and safety legislative regime.



Support for employees and employers involved in a complaint.

According to a study published by Statistics Canada*

61%: Largest increase in sexual assaults reported in Quebec after #MeToo.

12.4 to 20: Increase in complaints per 100,000 population.

36%: Second highest increase reported in Newfoundland.

24%: Rate reported in other provinces and territories.

59% to 74%: Increase in national figures.

60%: Women reported having experienced harassment in the workplace and 41% stated that there was no attempt to resolve a reported incident.

72%: Did not report the harassment because they feared they would not be believed, they would be perceived as a troublemaker by the employer, or they would face retaliation by the harasser.

#MeToo and your Corporate Culture

Gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying are not new. What's new is that the victims are now vocal. Social media has given them the power to share, gain followers, and help others have their voices heard.



Recommendations

As your organization adjusts to this new reality, here are some pertinent questions to consider:



- **What is your policy regarding harassment of any kind and when was the last time you reviewed or made any updates?**
- **Is your leadership team engaged in open discussions to make sure that you create a harassment-free workplace environment where those affected are not afraid to report the incident?**

Take the time to really assess your corporate culture. Expend on some resources towards providing additional education to your employees. Position human resources as a partner and support system to those that are affected.

strive for. Training for employees, investigation and due diligence for all incidents, and support for all employees involved in a complaint - *does your corporate culture support those principles?*

While Bill C-65 only applies to the federal government, the process outlined is a good baseline for any organization to

How Sterling Can Help:

Did you know that conducting background screening prior to hiring can help you discover history of harassments? Sterling can help you mitigate risks by uncovering:



Previous convictions through Canadian Criminal Record Check or Local Police Search



Reasons for termination from previous employer through Employment Verifications or Reference Interviews

About Sterling Backcheck

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*References: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/181108/dq181108b-eng.htm>



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