

## Member's Quarterly

## Spring 2026 Edition

### President's Message

## Incivility in the Workplace Costs Everyone

*Make sure you're fully prepared*

**I**t feels like we are having a wave of incivility throughout society and in the workplace these days. It can range from rudeness to disrespect and while it is not the same as harassment or bullying, it can still be hurtful and harmful. A study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that it actually costs employers and companies money - a lot of money. Their estimate is that US organizations collectively lose more than \$1.2 billion in reduced productivity per day due to uncivil behaviours at work and \$828 million per day due to absenteeism caused by incivility.

There's no reason to think that the Canadian experience would be much different. We are all paying a price for incivility at the workplace. That comes in the form of lost productivity and profit as well as increased stress levels for employees, lower engagement at work and an overall dissatisfaction with their jobs. Some employees even report that they would take a cut in pay if it meant they could eliminate all forms of incivility in their jobs.

So, what if anything can employers do to deal with this rising tide of incivility at work? Like most problems, the solution starts with senior management. Leaders need to be role models when it comes to promoting a civil and respectful workplace. Time to walk the talk and model what you'd like to see your employees follow.

Many organizations are trying to combat incivility by introducing a zero tolerance policy for incidents of workplace incivility. However, these types of policies only work when employees are encouraged to report such situations and there exists a real and tangible follow up by management and HR. This can be supported by having a prepared form that employees can complete and by publicizing this policy and process through employee emails or internal newsletters.

The follow-up, investigation and action portions of dealing with a complaint of uncivil behaviour are also vital to your credibility as an organization. If there is an intervention, the employee who filed the complaint should be notified and proper records should be kept of the types and frequencies of complaints as a measure of how well your policy is working. Training to highlight this issue and to help prevent incidents from arising in the future can also be helpful towards building a more respectful and welcoming workplace.

Doing nothing when it comes to incivility in the workplace is definitely not an option. There's way too much to lose from both an employee and a financial perspective. It will be well worth the investment to deal with this problem now and not wait until the costs become overwhelming.

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