



**WORKPLACE
VIOLENCE**

**It's not part
of the job**

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Workplace violence discussion paper seriously flawed say unions

New poll shows overwhelming support for legislation

(Dartmouth) – Four of Nova Scotia's public sector unions say a discussion paper on workplace violence released yesterday by Nova Scotia's Department of Environment and Labour is missing the mark.

The Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU), Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU), Nova Scotia Nurses' Union (NSNU) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Nova Scotia are working together as the Coalition Against Workplace Violence.

In November, they called on the provincial government to enact draft workplace violence regulations into legislation.

The call for legislation was strengthened with results from a CRA Atlantic Quarterly survey commissioned by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union conducted between November 17 and December 3, 2006.

The poll says that 94 per cent of Nova Scotians believe it's important and critically important to have legislation that protects workers from workplace violence. Eighty per cent of Nova Scotians were not aware that there was no legislation to prevent or deal with violence or harassment in the workplace.

NSGEU President Joan Jessome says one of the glaring problems with the discussion paper is the exclusion of emotional and psychological forms of abuse from the department's definition of workplace violence.

"Intimidation, bullying and malicious gossip are all serious and pervasive forms of violence on the job," says Jessome. "We know first hand that human resource practices and procedures, which the paper suggests should be used to address these forms of violence, have done absolutely nothing to stop it from growing in workplaces and seriously damaging work relationships. Not including these forms of violence in an overall definition within legislation is unacceptable to the Coalition members."

NSTU President Mary-Lou Donnelly says the discussion paper fails to recognize that workplace violence legislation must be put in place before other parts of a comprehensive strategy will work.

"There is no commitment of timing to adopt the regulations into legislation except as part of "workplace violence strategies within the fiscal year"—it may not happen for a very long time," says Donnelly. "Also, suggesting that the regulation only should apply to "higher risk workplaces" makes it more difficult to be taken seriously across the board."

NSNU President Janet Hazelton says she's concerned the government is downplaying the need for putting workplace violence regulations into law through legislation.

“The most important reason for the legislation is not, as the department suggests “...to establish a clear line of accountability and in this case further clarification of current responsibilities...,” says Hazelton. “It’s to make it mandatory with the force of law that action, especially preventive action against workplace violence, be taken.”

CUPE President Danny Cavanagh says holding a public consultation does not mean “a commitment to take action” as stated in the government’s media release.

“Unfortunately, it could well mean the opposite: an elaborate cover and excuse for continued inaction.”

The Coalition members say they will be responding formally to the government’s discussion paper in a thorough written submission and will be encouraging their members to also make their opinions known.

The discussion paper may be viewed online at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla>.

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The margin of error for the CRA Atlantic Quarterly survey is + or – 4.9 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

For more information on the Coalition Against Workplace Violence Campaign, please visit www.stopworkplaceviolence.ca .

Media contacts:

John McCracken, Communications Officer, CUPE NS: 222-8457
Shalon McLachlan, Communications Officer, NSGEU: 497-6761
Janet Hazelton, President, NSNU: 456-2084
Angela Murray, Communications Officer, NSTU: 497-0194

CAWV, the Coalition Against Workplace Violence www.StopWorkplaceViolence.ca



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