



## **Workplace Violence on the Rise**

*Will your health and safety program meet the mark?*

Ontario workplace violence has increased by 23% over the last five years. No wonder Ministry of Labour (MOL) inspectors have it on their radar like never before.

While statistics for restaurants, bars and hotels may not be as severe as for other sectors, such as health care, they're significant enough to make a serious dent in a firm's reputation, work culture and bottom line—never mind invite the prospect of new legislation. Take a look:

- Between 2001 and 2005 in Canada, 69 people were murdered at work, eight in bars or restaurants<sup>1</sup>;
- When compared with all workplaces, 10% of violent incidents occurred in bars or restaurants<sup>2</sup>.
- In B.C. (stats not available for Ontario), occupations with the most violent incidents are bouncers and door attendants (34%), bartenders (16%), wait staff (13%) and desk/reservation clerks (8%)<sup>3</sup>.

Hospitality is an industry built around people, with programs and operating standards designed to protect and promote the well-being of staff and customers alike. Here are some tips and resources to rejuvenate your health and safety system and keep violence at bay.

### **Know where you're most at risk**

Several work activities are more at risk of workplace violence than others; these include handling cash; looking after valuables; working with the public; working alone or with just a few people; working where alcohol is being consumed; and working late nights or very early mornings.

Everyone is at risk of workplace violence, but perhaps no group more so than young workers—prone to being heroes, convinced of their invincibility, and eager to please their supervisors. Channel some of your quality improvement efforts here.

### **Do a self-audit before inspectors come calling**

Workplace violence is on the MOL's "hospitality sector plan" for 2008-2009 (visit "Health and Safety" at the Ministry of Labour website). That means inspectors will be looking specifically for evidence of effective programs that protect your workers from employee-to-employee and public-to-employee violence. In revisiting your plan, make sure you:

- a) Assess all potential workplace violence hazards in your workplace (ask your staff what situations make them uneasy);
- b) Design a program that has robust and visible support from senior management;
- c) Train and retrain staff so they know what to do when incidents covered by your policy occur.

The Ontario Service Safety Alliance (OSSA) is your WSIB-approved provider of health and safety solutions, and your trusted advisor in developing a workplace violence prevention program for your organization. Call OSSA at 1-888-478-6772 or email [info@ossa.com](mailto:info@ossa.com).

The Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association is Canada's largest provincial hospitality industry association. For more information call 1-800-668-8906 or email [info@orhma.com](mailto:info@orhma.com)

<sup>1</sup> For reference: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/85F0033MIE/85F0033MIE2007013.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Same

<sup>3</sup> From: [http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/reports/focus\\_reports/assets/pdf/focushotel.pdf](http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/reports/focus_reports/assets/pdf/focushotel.pdf)