

IHSA Bulletin:

**Workplace Harassment and
Anti-Black Racism**

INJUSTICE

Acknowledging Anti-Black Racism

Recent acts of anti-Black racism in Ontario, Canada, and the United States – some of which are being investigated as hate crimes – have brought anti-Black racism to the forefront of collective awareness in Canada. While it's the brutal violence and trauma that has propelled this topic to the forefront of our awareness, anti-Black racism has been a longstanding experience for Black Canadians.

The negative psychological impact of racist acts and the way they carry over into the workplace and our communities is real. On top of the psychological effects of outward racist acts, there is sometimes a more silent form of racism that manifests in a lack of attention or even silence in response to reported or witnessed racism.

IHSA is committed to working with construction sector partners to recognize and take up critical conversations on anti-Black racism in Ontario's workplaces.

IHSA's Commitment

IHSA is one of the partners in Ontario's health and safety system, and a trusted resource for the construction, electrical utilities, and transportation sectors. We are committed to improving the lives of Ontario workers and are proud of our role in helping to make Ontario one of the safest places in the world to work.

IHSA acknowledges that threats and acts of racial discrimination and violence towards Black people in Ontario and across the country are dehumanizing and unacceptable. They leave millions of Black people and their allies hurting, experiencing racial trauma, loss, and fear.

The ability to recognize and address racism through fairness, empathy, mindfulness, and a commitment to equality and diversity are required in order to reject anti-Black racism from our workplaces. We need to make room for all voices and perspectives in constructive conversations.

As a health and safety leader, it is imperative that we encourage and support the creation of safe spaces to hold meaningful and ongoing dialogue about racism and discrimination.

To reaffirm our commitments to reject anti-Black racism and all forms of racism and discrimination, IHSA urges all Ontarians to do their part to speak up against racism and discrimination in our workplaces and communities.

How Ontario's construction sector is working together to reject racism in the workplace

It is critical for leaders within the sector to state how they are addressing anti-Black racism and discrimination and how they will create and maintain accountability. IHSA applauds campaigns like Built for Respect and Construction Against Racism Everywhere (CARE) for taking a role in campaigning for a system-wide sector approach.

Built for Respect

After seeing an increase in racist and discriminatory acts and threats within the construction sector, several construction-related groups have teamed up to launch the Built for Respect campaign to address anti-Black racism within the industry.

Built for Respect's mandate works to provide clarity on workplace expectations and to ensure every workplace remains equitable and inclusive for everyone.

Led by construction system partners – Tridel, Ellis Don, the Labourers' International Union of North America, Local 183, Residential Construction Council of Ontario, and, the Building Industry & Land Development Association – Built for Respect works to provide training and education in support of anti-racism by raising awareness and highlighting that racist acts typically don't occur in isolation, and that systemic racism is prevalent within the field of construction.

Construction Against Racism Everywhere (CARE)

The Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) has also launched the Construction Against Racism Everywhere (CARE) campaign in response to a string of widely condemned incidents involving nooses found on jobs sites in Toronto this summer.

The CARE initiative brings together contractors, unions, and government to address racism on job sites across the province.

IHSA is committed to supporting the Built for Respect and CARE campaigns, and encourages other construction system partners to acknowledge the prevalence of systemic anti-Black racism and to facilitate conversations in their workplaces.

IHSA also supports and commends the Prevention Council, an advisory body to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development and the Chief Prevention Officer, for their commitment to reviewing the issue of anti-Black racism in the construction sector and beyond.

Obligations and resources for strong Workplace Violence and Harassment policies

Legal obligations to protect workers from racism are described in the [Ontario's Human Rights Code](#). Under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA), employers are required to take measures to prevent workplace harassment, which includes racism. Both the Ontario Human Rights Code and the OHSA apply to every workplace in Ontario.

Employers, supervisors, and workers may be held liable under the OHSA and Ontario's human rights system if harassment occurs in the workplace, at worksites, or at work-related events. This places a firm responsibility on all workplace parties, particularly employers, to create and maintain a healthy, discrimination-free work environment.

Employers have specific duties with respect to workplace harassment and workplace violence under the OHSA. The OHSA requires employers to:

- have workplace violence and workplace harassment policies and programs in place
- ensure that appropriate information is shared with workers about these policies and programs.

It is critical for employers to state how they address racism and discrimination in their workplace and how they will create and maintain accountability. A strong workplace violence and harassment policy will help foster a safe and healthy work culture for everyone – with accountability for actions taken built in.

IHSA offers resources for employers on workplace violence and harassment, including:

- [Workplace Violence and Harassment: What Employers Should Know \(eLearning\)](#)
- [Workplace Violence and Harassment Toolkit](#)

[Canada's Criminal Code](#) deals with matters such as violent acts, sexual assault, threats and behaviours such as stalking. The police should be contacted in these situations. As noted, harassment may also be a matter that falls under [Ontario's Human Rights Code](#).

More information can be found in the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development's [Workplace Violence and Harassment: Understanding the Law](#) guide.