

IRWO

insights

Issue #1, Fall 2023

Let's start out with a few introductions. The Independent Respectful Workplace Office (IRWO) is relatively new to the LABC, having been launched in its current form this past spring. Our role is to provide you with **support** so that you can uphold the *Respectful Workplace Policy* and help maintain a respectful environment for everyone working in the Legislative Assembly.

Support can take the form of training, advising, coaching, supportive dialogues, mediations, and investigations. We briefly introduce those services below, and ask you a few 'what if' reflective questions, so that you can become acquainted with the IRWO's role, and also your responsibilities. The IRWO is currently developing its training plan which will include an e-course to assist you in learning more about the IRWO and your responsibilities under the *Respectful Workplace Policy*.

In addition to my role as Registrar, the IRWO includes Advisors, Coaches, Facilitators, Mediators, Trainers, and Investigators – all lawyers who specialize in dispute resolution in the workplace. Visit the newly launched IRWO website (irwobc.ca/contact) to 'meet' the team and learn more about the IRWO.

On behalf of the IRWO and the team, we look forward to supporting you and the LABC in maintaining a respectful workplace.



Neelu Chauhan,
Barrister & Solicitor
Registrar, IRWO



IRWO e-Course

The IRWO's *Respectful Workplace Policy* e-course will be designed to respond to four questions:

- **What is the IRWO?**
- **What is the *Respectful Workplace Policy*?**
- **How do you connect with the IRWO?**
- **What can you expect from the IRWO?**

Information about this e-course will be posted to the IRWO website in the fall.

Why is a respectful workplace important?

You and the people you work with deserve and require a respectful workplace. A very bleak picture is painted when it doesn't exist. The [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#) provides a few examples.

An individual who is bullied, harassed, discriminated against, or subjected to violence may experience:

- Anger, frustration, and vulnerability
- Lack of confidence
- Poor health and anxiety
- Low morale and productivity

And more...

A disrespectful, unhealthy workplace may experience:

- Increased absenteeism, turnover, and stress
- Increased costs for employee assistance programs, recruitment, etc.
- Decreased productivity, motivation, and morale
- Reduced corporate image, customer confidence, and customer service

Reflective what-if questions

1

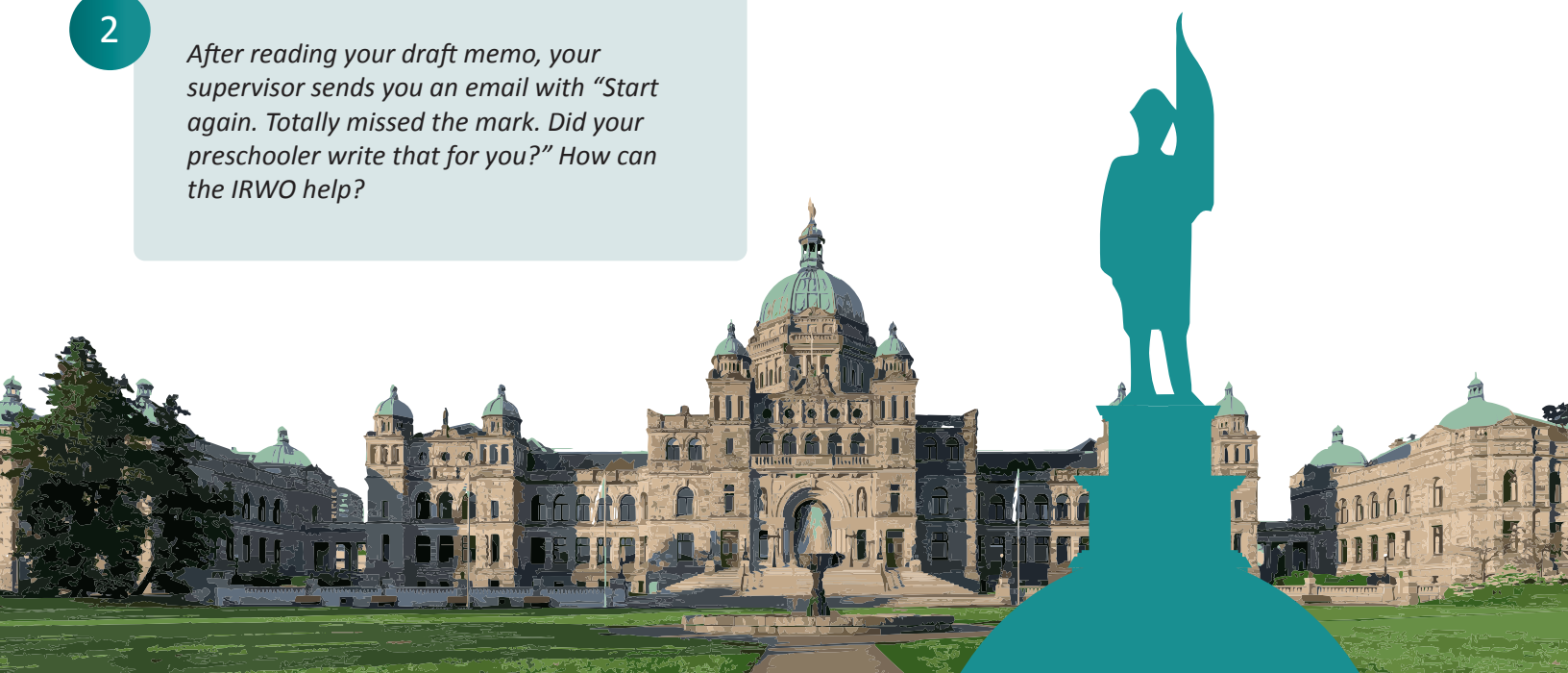
During a break in the meeting, you and a colleague are discussing how to approach a particularly sensitive item on the agenda. A staff member you had an altercation with last month over a similar issue overhears your conversation, and explodes, yelling that you are way off the mark, interfering in her work, and insisting you leave the meeting, using several expletives. How can the IRWO help?

3

Your colleague (a caucus staff member) and a political staff member just returned from a conference held in Ottawa. Over coffee, she tells you about some inappropriate things the political staff member told her while they were at a pub after the conference gala, including that he was interested in dating her, and he even made a move. She said it was after having several drinks, she was able to deflect it, and then nothing more was said or done. How can the IRWO help?

2

After reading your draft memo, your supervisor sends you an email with "Start again. Totally missed the mark. Did your preschooler write that for you?" How can the IRWO help?



IRWO services

- **Training** is focused on two key areas: 1) the *Respectful Workplace Policy*, when it applies, and how to access the IRWO to request services; and 2) how to individually support a respectful workplace and how to respond when you experience a troubling incident. Along with the *Respectful Workplace Policy* e-course to be released this fall, we will be providing training sessions so that you, your colleagues, and everyone working at the LABC understands the *Respectful Workplace Policy*, how to access the resolution process, and how to work towards a more respectful workplace. The irwobc.ca/training_page will be updated as soon as the training schedule is released.
- **Support** comes in several forms, from providing advice (e.g. does the *Respectful Workplace Policy* apply to this situation) and coaching (e.g. on ways to address a concern), to offering alternative dispute resolution services such as supported dialogues (informal facilitated meetings to discuss the conflict) and mediation (where a mediator assists those involved to reach a mutually satisfactory resolution).
- **Investigations** occur when complaints are received of alleged incidents of disrespectful behaviour, harassment, discrimination, or violence. Investigators conduct interviews, review documents, and analyze the evidence to decide whether the alleged incident breaches the *Respectful Workplace Policy*.

Overview of the IRWO

Introduction to the Independent Respectful Workplace Office (IRWO)



What

The IRWO:

- 1 Is independent from the Legislative Assembly of BC and the Participant Groups
- 2 Upholds the *Respectful Workplace Policy*
- 3 Helps maintain a respectful environment for Participants in the Legislative Assembly

- 4 Provides respectful workplace services:



Who

The Registrar, Advisors, Coaches, Facilitators, Mediators, Trainers and Investigators are lawyers who specialize in dispute resolution in the workplace

Where

Virtual and in-person services

When

Will respond to requests within 5 business days

How

Contact the IRWO
W: irwobc.ca
E: info@irwobc.ca