

# HR QUARTERLY BULLETIN

WINTER 2023

## Driving change and shaping the future



### LEGAL UPDATES

- Bill 88 Working for Workers Act 2022 – Reminder for January 1
- Tips for writing a Remote Working Policy
- Challenges for returning workers back to the workplace

### HEALTH & WELLNESS

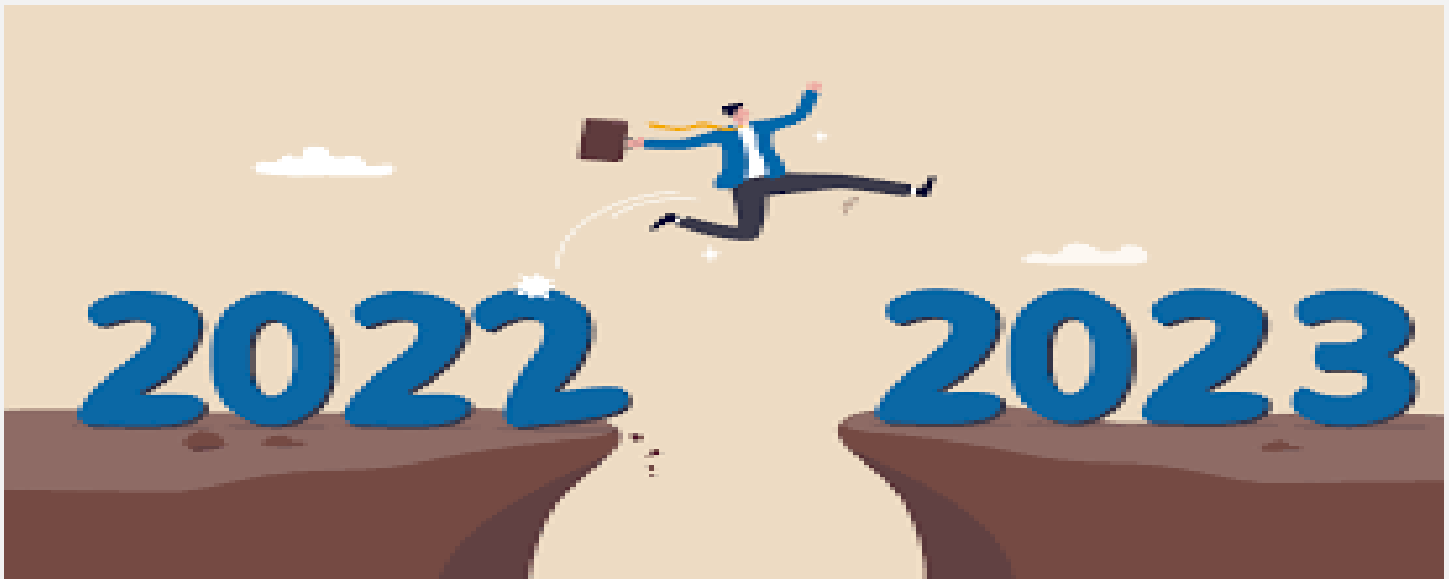
- Mental health and well-being – tips and coping strategies to remain resilient
- Employee Insurance – changes to sickness benefits

### RETAINING EMPLOYEES

Most organizations are finding it challenging to attract, recruit, and retain valuable team members. Retaining valuable employees is far less costly to recruiting new employees.



Employers have been adjusting to everchanging and shifting priorities during and post-pandemic. At S&G HR Consulting, we support local business in helping them adapt to these changes by providing consulting services, policy development, and training programs that fit their organization's unique, specific needs.



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

### 1) **Bill 88 Working for Workers Act 2022 Ontario– Reminder for January 1**

Under the Act, employers who employ 25 or more employees on January 1 of each year must ensure they have a written policy in place with respect to electronic monitoring of employees and right to disconnect policy before March 1 of that year.

### 2) **Remote Working Policy** – Important to have a policy and procedures in place to cover the following areas:

- Duties & Responsibilities: Specify that duties, responsibilities and performance expectations remain unchanged whether an employee works remotely and/or in the workplace;
- Performance Standards: Reiterate that employees remain required to observe regular office hours, be available for phone calls, meetings and/or team projects.
- Safety and Maintenance of Remote Work Environment: Confirm that employees are individually responsible for the safety and maintenance of their home and workspace. Specifically, if a workspace is not private and/or distraction free, employees are required to take steps to remedy and/or discuss an alternative working arrangement; and
- Protection of Confidential Information: Reiterate that employees remain required to abide by any policies and/or procedures with respect to the protection of confidential information and the obligation of an employee to continue to take necessary steps to ensure that all employer information is properly secured, protected and not accessible to others.

### 3) **Challenges when returning employees back to the workplace** – An employee who has been working entirely remotely for the past few years might consider a mandatory return to work to be a ‘substantial change’ to the terms of their employment and therefore allege constructive dismissal.

Employers are able to make unilateral changes to an employee's terms of employment which could include:

- Adequate notice - The length of notice required will vary for each employee based on their length of service, how impactful the change will be to the essential terms of their employment, and more.
- Offer an increase in salary to reflect inflation and use this increase to re-negotiate an entirely new employment agreement with a return-to-work provision

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

As we move into the winter season, the colder weather, lack of sunlight, and decreased amount of exercise can impact the mental health of your employees in your workplace. There are three components of overall health that include Mental Health, Social Health, and Physical Health. Some ways that employers can help their employees:

Communicate with empathy – by letting them know that it is ok to be anxious and provide them with helpful resources for seasonal depression, anxiety, and coping skills.

Promote Mental Fitness – using a daily journal to track negative and positive thoughts, taking time to feel gratitude, meditating and breathing exercises, and practicing mindfulness

Promote Physical Health – maintaining 20 minutes of physical activity per day, eating regular meals, monitoring alcohol use, getting sufficient rest/sleep to help concentration and boost stamina

Maintaining Social Connections – focusing on positive relationships, maintaining daily interactions with family and friends, helping others by joining social groups or volunteering.

**Additional information at:** [MHCC Workplace Mental Health | Winter Mini-Guide \(mentalhealthcommission.ca\)](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca)

### **Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits**

There are new changes to the Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefits that can be obtained by employees in the workforce.

Through these benefits, they can receive 55% of their earnings up to a maximum of \$650 a week. The number of weeks of benefits received depends on the date that the claim begins:

- before December 18, 2022: up to 15 weeks
- on or after December 18, 2022: up to 26 weeks **New**

EI sickness benefits can provide employees with financial assistance if they are unable to work for medical reasons. In order to make a claim, a medical certificate must be obtained showing that the individual is unable to work for medical reasons and for approximately how long. Medical reasons include illness, injury, quarantine, or any medical condition that prevents one from working.

## RETAINING EMPLOYEES

Most organizations are finding it challenging to attract, recruit, and retain valuable team members. Retaining valuable employees is far less costly to recruiting new employees. To avoid losing your top employees, here are some actions that will help boost job satisfaction and retain your best employees:



1. **Onboarding and Orientation** – this is the critical first step in welcoming new employees to your organization and provide training in support relating to their new job as well as the company’s culture and values.
2. **Employee Compensation** – it is important to evaluate and adjust wages regularly to remain competitive. Other considerations are health benefits, bonuses, and paid time off.
3. **Perks** – can include flexible schedules and remote work options.
4. **Wellness Offerings** – supporting your employees’ wellbeing through training/stress-management programs and reimbursement for fitness classes.
5. **Communication** – promoting timely, constructive, and positive communication and connecting with individual team members on a regular basis.
6. **Feedback on Performance** – scheduling frequent one-on-one meetings to review performance while setting realistic short-term and long-term goals.
7. **Training and Development** – upskilling and training to gain new skills, professional development, tuition reimbursement, and succession planning.
8. **Recognition** – saying thank you or writing a simple note of gratitude goes a long way. Otherwise, recognition programs can be instituted with little or no cost.
9. **Work-life balance** – understanding and recognizing that your employees have lives outside of work. Encourage employees to set boundaries.
10. **Effective Change Management** – if your organization is going through a dramatic shift, ensure that you are keeping you employees informed to ease anxieties and limit rumours.

### Resources:

For your free Organizational Assessment, click [here](#)

For access to further resources and useful links relating to Covid-19, health and safety mandates, and public health updates, please visit: [S&G HR Consulting Resources](#).

For any additional questions, please contact us at: S&G HR Consulting [905-325-3396](tel:905-325-3396) or by email at [marina.glencross@sghrconsultingsolutions.com](mailto:marina.glencross@sghrconsultingsolutions.com).