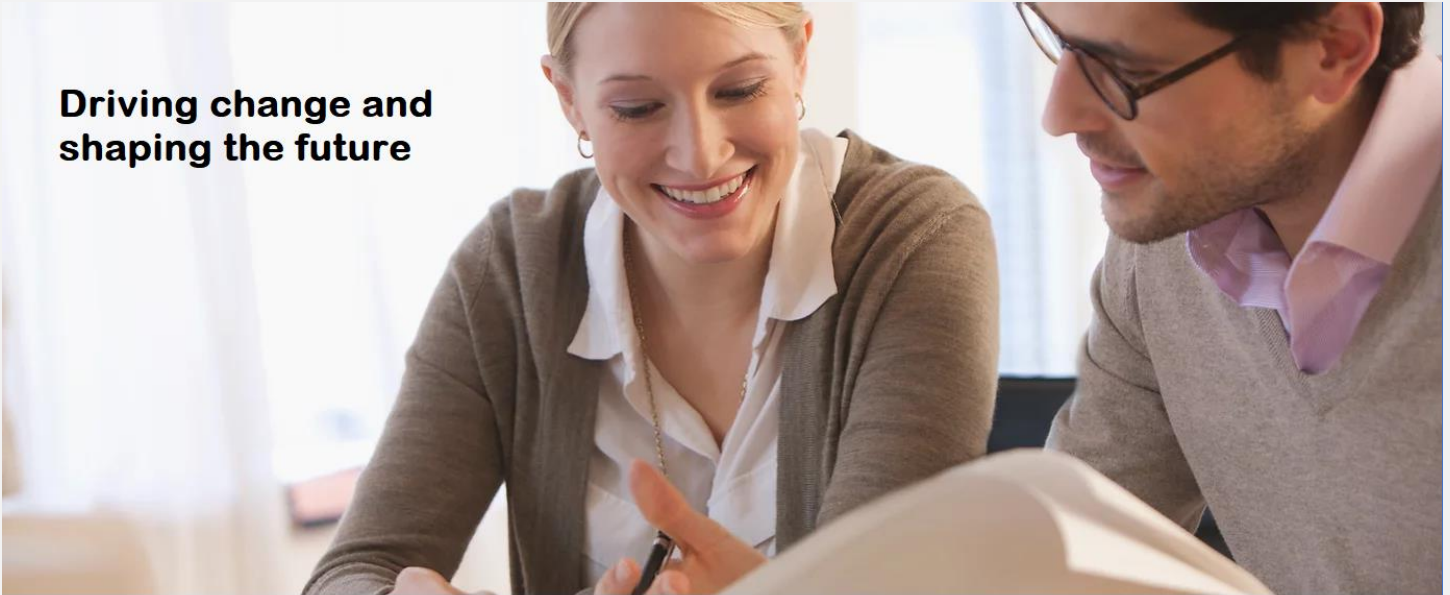


HR QUARTERLY BULLETIN

WINTER 2025

Driving change and shaping the future



LEGAL UPDATES

The newest Bill, the *Working for Workers Six Act, 2024* (Bill 229), proposes changes to the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to introduce two new types of leaves.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Impact of Debt and Mental Health on the Workplace - Increased debt from holiday expenses can amplify anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed as employees return to work in January

FEATURE ARTICLE

Work Trends to Watch in 2025 Preparing for changes in the work environment starts with understanding these trends and their potential impact on business strategy and growth.



Employers have been adjusting to everchanging and shifting priorities. At S&G HR Consulting, Sandra & Marina support local businesses to adapt to these changes by providing consulting services, policy development, and training programs that fit their organization's unique, specific needs. For any additional questions, please contact us through our [website](#) or call us at [905-325-3396](tel:905-325-3396).



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Over the past several years, the provincial government has been highly focused on legislative requirements in Ontario's workplaces. The newest Bill, the *Working for Workers Six Act, 2024* (Bill 229) proposes changes to the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to introduce two new types of leaves aimed at providing additional support for employees in specific circumstances:

1. Placement of a Child Leave (Section 47.1):

- This leave is available to employees who have been employed for at least 13 weeks.
- It allows up to **16 weeks of unpaid leave** due to the placement or arrival of a child through adoption, surrogacy, or other specified circumstances.
- The employee must provide notice to the employer, and certain evidence may be requested.
- The start and end dates of the leave could be adjusted under specific conditions outlined in the section.

2. Long-Term Illness Leave (Section 49.8):

- Employees who have been with their employer for at least 13 consecutive weeks are eligible for this leave.
- It allows up to **27 weeks of unpaid leave** if the employee is unable to perform their duties due to a **serious medical condition**.
- A certified health practitioner must provide a certificate that:
 - Confirms the serious medical condition.
 - Specifies the period during which the employee will be unable to work.
- The leave may be extended within the 27-week limit, depending on the certificate's details.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Post Holiday Impact of Debt and Mental Health on the Workplace

The winter holidays, often associated with joy and festivities, can leave ongoing challenges for employees, particularly in the areas of mental health and financial stress. Many people face increased debt from holiday expenses, which can amplify anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed as they return to work in January. Coupled with post-holiday blues, this can significantly impact productivity and morale in the workplace.

Financial stress often leads to absenteeism, presenteeism, and difficulty concentrating, as employees struggle with managing their budgets. Additionally, feelings of guilt or regret from overspending can exacerbate pre-existing mental health issues like depression or anxiety. The colder, shorter days of winter further compound these struggles, contributing to seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

Employers can play a crucial role in alleviating these pressures by:

- Creating a supportive work environment.
- Offering resources such as financial planning workshops.
- Providing access to mental health support services.
- Offering flexible working arrangements.
- Encouraging open conversations about mental health and reducing stigma.



Implementing these strategies demonstrates a commitment to employee well-being and promotes a culture of understanding and care. Proactive efforts to address these challenges benefit not only individuals but also the organization, leading to improved morale, stronger collaboration, higher engagement, and sustained overall productivity.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Workplace Trends to Watch in 2025

Thriving in business goes beyond staying ahead of the competition; it involves anticipating the trends that will shape the future workplace. Preparing for changes in the work environment starts with understanding these trends and their potential impact on business strategy and growth.



The Rise of EQ in Leadership

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) will become a key factor in effective leadership. As AI handles more tasks, skills like empathy, adaptability, and relationship-building will drive success. Leaders should focus on personal growth, cultivating emotional agility, and building people-centered cultures that can embrace change while fostering talent and innovation.

RTO and Hybrid Policymaking

More organizations are finalizing return-to-office and hybrid work policies. It's crucial to establish clear policies and communicate them early, giving employees enough time to adjust. Offering explanations and resources for these policies will help ensure they foster cohesion and effectiveness.

Conscious Business Practices

Today, people are seeking a change and demanding more conscious businesses and leaders. The focus will shift towards prioritizing what truly matters, such as employee well-being, fulfillment, and purpose. Leaders and organizations must adopt conscious business practices that consider the impact on the entire workforce.

Leading Change

Leading change will remain a key trend in 2025, with an accelerated pace. Leaders must stay ahead of emerging trends and be agile enough to guide their teams through constant change. Proactive leaders who anticipate changes will be better equipped to lead their teams strategically through them.

Low Employee Engagement

Many businesses are experiencing low employee engagement and morale. To address the root causes and cultivate a culture that encourages retention, align your team's work with your mission and values, to foster open communication and prioritize professional development across all levels.

Individual AI Experimentation

To build AI capabilities within your workforce, employees can explore how AI can enhance their roles. This allows them to align their skills, refine their expertise, and ultimately achieve impactful results.

These trends highlight the importance for HR to lead in areas like communication, culture, technology, leadership development, and aligning HR with overall business strategies.

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](#).