

APRIL 2024 MONTH IN REVIEW

Nova Scotia

LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Minimum Wage

Apr 1: Nova Scotia raised its general minimum wage by 20 cents to \$15.20 per hour. That's still the lowest minimum wage in the Atlantic Provinces and the second lowest in all of Canada ahead of only Saskatchewan at \$14.00 per hour.

Action Point: Find out about the latest round of [minimum wage increases](#) taking effect across Canada

Labour Relations

Mar 1: The Nova Scotia Labour Board issued a revised [Information Bulletin](#) on how employees who file *OHS Act* complaints and don't have a lawyer or professional representation can use Board Navigators to help them deal with the complaint process.

Labour Relations

Mar 19: In the unlikely event that it passes, newly tabled [Private Member Bill 435](#) would make it illegal for government and private employers to hire scabs and take reprisals against workers for refusing to perform work that's ordinarily done by a worker that's currently on strike.

Employment Benefits

Mar 25: Nova Scotia's 2024 Budget Bill ([Bill 419](#)), which is currently in Committee, amends the *Pension Benefits Act* to extend the current right of plan members and

former members suffering from life-shortening disabilities to unlock their pensions to retired members. The Bill would also allow former members who aren't retired to withdraw their entitlement from the plan when they cease to be a Canadian resident for at least 2 years.

New Laws

Mar 25: The [Budget Bill](#) making its way through the Nova Scotia Assembly includes a new act called *The Professional Firefighters Volunteer Act* which bans organizations from refusing to employ, disciplining, terminating or otherwise punishing an individual because they work or intend to work as a volunteer firefighter.

Action Point: Find out how to discipline employees [without committing reprisals or retaliation](#)

Accessibility

Mar 15: The government said that it's reviewed the independent review of the *Accessibility Act* and will take action to address its recommendations, including by developing and enacting accessibility standards, supporting public sector organizations to update and implement their accessibility plans and increasing communications and engagement.

Action Point: Find out more about [accessibility laws across Canada](#)

Health & Safety

Mar 1: Nova Scotia's work injury rate increased from 1.36 to 1.38 per 100 workers during the third quarter of 2023, the [WCB reports](#). Days lost to workplace injury was 260 per 100 covered workers, as compared to 292 in the final quarter of 2022, thanks to progress in the long-term care, home care and disability support sectors.

CASES

Labour Relations: Direct Communications with Union Employee Violates Collective Agreement

With union relations at a low ebb, a lumber company began writing directly to employees criticizing the union's actions and questioning the competence of certain union officials. Start acting in good faith or we'll stop deducting and remitting union dues from employees' paycheques, the company threatened the union. The union cried foul, contending that these actions violated the company's

duty under the collective agreement to recognize and respect the union. The Nova Scotia arbitrator agreed and awarded the union damages. The company won the next round when a review court quashed the arbitrator's ruling. But the union got the last laugh when the province's top court, the Court of Appeal, concluded that the original arbitration award was reasonable and reinstated it [[United Food and Commercial Workers Union Canada](#), 2024 NSCA 27 (CanLII), March 7, 2024].