

# Nova Scotia

## LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Minimum Wage

Apr 1: Nova Scotia implemented the first stage of what will be the largest minimum wage increase in its history, \$1.30 per hour, by boosting the general minimum wage 50 cents to \$15.70 per hour. Stage 2 will take place on October 1 when the minimum wage increases another 80 cents to \$16.50 per hour.

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

### Leaves of Absence

Apr 1: Effective today, paid domestic violence leave under the *Labour Standards Code* increases from 3 to 5 days. To be eligible, employees must have at least 3 months of service. Eligible employees are also entitled to up to 16 continuous weeks of domestic violence leave and 5 additional unpaid days, which may be continuous or intermittent.

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement a legally sound [Domestic Violence Leave Compliance Game Plan](#) along with a [Leave Policy template](#) that you can tailor to meet the new Nova Scotia rules.

### Leaves of Absence

Feb 21: Newly tabled [Private Member Bill 31](#), which is unlikely to pass, would amend the Nova Scotia *Labour Standards Code* to provide employees paid leave for a personal illness, injury, or medical emergency of themselves and for the personal injury, medical emergency, or death of a family member.

### Labour Relations

Feb 27: Newly tabled [Private Member Bill 51](#) would allow for a trade union to be certified as a bargaining agent without a vote where more than half the members of a bargaining unit are members in good standing of the trade union. The Bill also lowers the membership threshold for requiring a vote from 40% to 35% to match the threshold used in the Construction Industry Labour Relations Part of the *Trade Union Act*.

### Discrimination

Feb 27: Nova Scotia announced plans to give the Human Rights Commission a complete makeover for modern times. This is the first time the government will make significant changes to the Commission, which was established in 1967, in more than a decade.

### Discrimination

Feb 28: Newly tabled [Private Member Bill 58](#) proposes to establish a new equity directorate to regularly report on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues and consult with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community on legislation, new government policy development, and

employment.

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement a legally sound and effective [sexual orientation and transgender discrimination policy](#) at your workplace.

## Payroll

Mar 5: The newly proposed Nova Scotia Budget includes over \$500 million in tax cuts. Highlights include increasing the basic personal amount from \$8,744 to \$11,744, cutting the small business tax rate to 1.5% and increasing the small business deduction threshold to \$700,000. The proposed changes would take effect for the 2025 tax year.

## Payroll

Mar 18: First Reading for [Private Member Bill 83](#) that would require the government to provide a top-up payment to any Nova Scotia resident who receives EI benefits totaling less than \$600 per week to ensure that the resident gets at least \$600 week.

## Pay Equity

Mar 20: The Nova Scotia Assembly tabled [Private Member Bill 98](#), the *Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act*, that would require public employers to ensure that women and men receive equivalent compensation for work of comparable value while also requiring all employers to list the expect pay or pay range in publicly advertised job postings and refrain from seeking pay history information about a job applicant, either directly or via an agent.

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement a [Pay Transparency Compliance Game Plan](#) at your workplace.

## Labour Relations

Feb 27: [Private Member Bill 49](#), which is through First Reading but unlikely to pass, would ban employers from using the services of a person, whether paid or unpaid, to perform the work ordinarily done by workers who are on strike or locked out or take reprisals against workers for refusing to do such work.

## Retaliation

Mar 25: Newly tabled [Private Member Bill 11](#) would provide enhanced whistleblower protections for healthcare workers. Employers who violate the rules would be subject to fines of up to \$50,000 for an individual and \$250,000 for a corporation.

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

## New Laws

Mar 24: First of its kind legislation, [Bill 36, The Free Trade and Mobility within Canada Act](#), which is through Third Reading and just one step from passage, authorizes the Government of Nova Scotia to enter into reciprocity trade agreements with other provinces under which the goods manufactured and produced in those provinces would be treated the same as those produced locally in Nova Scotia. Reciprocity would also apply to professional certifications and licences.

## New Laws

Mar 6: The Governments of Canada and Nova Scotia announced funding over \$36.8 million in Atlantic Fisheries Fund (AFF) for 142 projects in the province's fishing and seafood sector. The money, which Ottawa and the province will split 70/30, will be used to help harvesters and processors modernize equipment and improve quality, productivity, and sustainability.

## Employment Benefits

Apr 1: New [Pension Benefits Regulations](#) take effect: i. 50% unlocking of pension funds allowed when transferring to a LIF at age 55; ii. earlier unlocking of small amounts (50% of YMPE) at age 55; iii. elimination of temporary income provisions for LIFs established after April 1, 2025; iv. pension plan statements required for former and retired members every 2 years; v. enhanced disclosure of the financial health of pension plan on member statements; vi. elimination of need for financial institutions to file specimen LIF contracts with Superintendent of Pensions; and vii. easier unlocking of funds from a pension plan for members due to shortened life expectancy or non-residence in Canada.

## New Laws

Mar 6: As in all parts of the country, U.S. tariffs are fueling Buy Canadian initiatives in Nova Scotia where local suppliers and retailers have been eagerly [applying](#) for the new [Nova Scotia Loyal program](#) designed to let residents who want to get behind Nova Scotia businesses make informed decisions about where to spend their money.

## New Laws

Mar 13: Nova Scotia announced new measures to support the vital seafood and aquaculture sectors from tariffs from the U.S. and China. The province has set aside \$200 million for a contingency fund and provided an additional \$200,000 in permanent funding to support market diversification activities specific to the seafood sector.

## New Laws

Feb 27: Registered nurses can now apply to participate in the province's first internal travel nurse program. The pilot program creates a Nova Scotia Health travel nurse team to be deployed to emergency departments with plans to hire 20 to 30 full-time registered nurses.

## Accessibility

Mar 21: Nova Scotia published [new regulations](#) implementing its first of 6 accessibility standards. The new Built Environment Accessibility Standard establishes rules for indoor and outdoor public, work, government, educational, and recreational spaces that will be required in Building Code Regulations governing the design and planning of new infrastructure, starting April 1, 2026.

**Action Point:** One key aspect of an accessible workplace is ensuring that fire and other emergency evacuation plans accommodate employees with mobility impairments or other disabilities. Find out how to make your own [emergency response plan accessible](#).

## Health & Safety

Feb 28: The Nova Scotia WCB revised its recently reported workplace fatality numbers from 2024. Although the total of 20 workplace fatalities in Nova Scotia, versus 18 in 2023, remains unchanged, the agency is now reporting that there were 7 fatalities were from traumatic injury, the same as in 2023 and one fewer than originally reported. There were also 6 deaths from occupational illness from past exposure (versus 9 in 2023), and 7 (one more than originally reported) from heart attack, stroke or other health-related event (versus 2 in 2023).

**Action Point:** Find out [how to create a vibrant workplace health and safety culture](#) at your company.

## Drugs & Alcohol

Mar 7: Nova Scotia will receive about \$809 million from tobacco companies under the new agreement settling nearly 3 decades of litigation by the provinces to recover the costs of treating tobacco users. That total includes about \$200 million in the first year and the balance over the next 15 to 20 years. The total value of the court-ordered resolution is \$32.5 billion, with the provinces getting \$24.7 billion.

**Action Point:** Find out how to comply with [workplace smoking laws](#).

## Workplace Violence

Feb 27: The Nova Scotia Assembly tabled [Private Member Bill 55](#) proposing to create a new government Fund to prevent intimate partner violence and support its victims.

**Action Point:** Find out [how to protect your employees](#) from the risk of workplace domestic violence.

## Workers' Comp

Apr 28: That's the deadline [to comment](#) on the WCB's [proposal](#) to implement the new joint duty of employer and injured workers to cooperate in the return-to-work process that takes effect on July 15, 2025. The new RTW rule requires the sides to: i. contact each other and maintain communication; ii. identify suitable and available work for the worker; and iii. provide the WCB information required to support RTW efforts.

## CASES

### Workplace Harassment: Fetishizing Asian Women Is Just Cause to Terminate Problematic Employee

The last straw for a night shift shelf stocker with a history of disciplinary infractions was deliberately violating the store's Respectful Workplace Policy by sexually harassing, fetishizing, and objectifying Asian women, such as by telling colleagues that he "loved to have sex" with them. That coupled with evidence of neglect of duty and disobedience was enough to persuade the Nova Scotia arbitrator that the store had just cause to terminate [[Fenerty v Sobeys Capital Incorporated](#), 2025 NSLB 30 (CanLII), March 7, 2025].

**Action Point:** Use the HR Insider [sexual harassment policy template](#) to review and improve your own policy.

### Labour Relations: Teacher's Claim for Injury Benefits Must Go to Arbitration, Not Civil Court

A unionized elementary school teacher filed a lawsuit to collect long-term disability and injury benefits for the injuries she suffered as a result of falling in the school parking lot on the way to work. In addition to denying liability for the injury, the employer claimed the dispute was governed by the collective agreement and asked the court to toss the civil lawsuit. The court stayed the case instead and the case eventually landed in the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal, which granted the employer's motion to dismiss. Having found that the court had no jurisdiction over what was exclusively a matter for labour arbitration, it should have tossed the lawsuit rather than granted a stay, concluded the high court [[\*Cape Breton-Victoria Regional Centre for Education v. McInnis\*](#), 2025 NSCA 15, March 5, 2025].