

# Your rights at work



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No matter how old you are, you have rights at work. You have the right to work in a safe place and to be treated with respect. There are also laws about things like how much your boss has to pay you and when you get breaks. These laws are called the Labour Standards Code.

Your employer must not discriminate against you because of age, gender identity, race, religion, or any other status. They must also make changes you need to be an effective employee if their policies, rules, or environment have a negative effect on your mental or physical health. This is called “accommodating” an employee. Accommodating you might include things like changing your schedule or giving you time off.

At the end of this section is a list of places you can go for help, called Resources.

## WORKING AS A MINOR

For some types of jobs, employers can only hire people who are 16 or older. These are:

- ▶ mining
- ▶ manufacturing
- ▶ construction
- ▶ forestry
- ▶ work in garages and automobile service stations
- ▶ work in hotels
- ▶ work in billiard rooms, pool rooms, bowling alleys or theatres

For some other jobs, you must be 19 or older. This includes jobs where you sell alcohol.

## Workers under 14

It is against the law to hire someone under 14 to do work that:

- ▶ is likely to harm the child’s health or development
- ▶ is likely to keep the child out of school or make it hard to learn at school

It is also against the law to hire someone under 14 to work:

- ▶ in a restaurant
- ▶ for more than 8 hours a day
- ▶ for more than 3 hours on a school day unless the provincial government gives the employer a certificate to allow the child to work

- ▶ during any day when work time plus school time adds up to more than 8 hours
- ▶ after 10 p.m. and before 6 a.m.

### **Workers who are 14-15 years old**

If you are 14 or 15, you can work in restaurants as long as:

- ▶ you are not operating cooking equipment
- ▶ your employer gives you safety training on all equipment
- ▶ Your employer supervises you properly

## **PAY AND BREAKS**

Your employer has to pay you at least minimum wage. When the provincial government decides workers need more money to keep up with costs like food and shelter, they may increase the minimum wage. [You can find the current minimum wage for Nova Scotia here.](#)

Here is what the law says about breaks at work:

- ▶ If you work full time, you get at least one full day off every week.
- ▶ You must get a full-half hour break every 5 hours.
- ▶ If your shift is 12 hours or more, you get another 30 minutes in breaks. You can take this all at once as a half-hour break, or in two 15-minute breaks.
- ▶ If you need breaks at other times for medical reasons, your boss has to let you take them.

After you have been working at a job for a year, you get two weeks of vacation time. Your employer also has to set aside vacation pay for you. Vacation pay is 4% of whatever you earn before taxes. Your vacation pay can be paid in two ways:

- ▶ Your employer can set it aside for you and pay it at least one day before you take vacation time, or
- ▶ Your employer can add it to each cheque so you get at least minimum wage plus 4%

Many workplaces let workers choose when to take vacation, but your boss has the right to decide for you.



## HOLIDAYS

There are six holidays in Nova Scotia that employers must give employees. Most workers get a paid day off on these days. The days are New Year's Day, Nova Scotia Heritage Day, Good Friday, Canada Day, Labour Day, and Christmas Day.

[You can read more about statutory holidays here.](#)

## MATERNITY LEAVE, LEAVES OF ABSENCE & EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

If you need time off work because of pregnancy, domestic violence, or an emergency, your employer has to let you take the time off. [You can read more about taking a leave from work here.](#)

If you lose your job or need to take a leave, you might be able to get employment insurance (EI). This is money the government gives people who can't work for some time. You can't get EI if you have been fired from your job for bad behaviour or if you quit without a good reason.

If you leave your job, apply for EI benefits as soon as you stop working. You can apply for benefits even if your boss hasn't given you your record of employment yet. You can apply for EI online or by going to a Service Canada location.

[Read more about EI or apply for EI here.](#)

## PROBLEMS AT WORK

If you have a problem with a customer or coworker, a good first step is to talk to your manager. If you aren't sure what to do in a situation, you have the right to ask questions and get help at work. If you have an issue with your manager, you might need to talk to their supervisor or the Human Resources department.

Some people might think they can get away with bullying or taking advantage of younger workers. This is against the law. If someone makes you feel uncomfortable at work or you think your employer is not following the law about things like pay or breaks, talk to your manager.

If your manager can't or won't help you, you can file a complaint with the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Division. You must file your



complaint within six months.

If your employer or someone at work discriminates against you, you can file a complaint with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission.

If you see a safety issue at work or in a public place, you can report it to the Nova Scotia government's Safety Branch. You can make a report without your boss finding out it was you.

Contact information for these resources is in the section below.

## Resources

### Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

- ▶ <https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/contact-us>
- ▶ 1-902-424-4111
- ▶ E-mail: [hrcinquiries@novascotia.ca](mailto:hrcinquiries@novascotia.ca)

### Nova Scotia Labour Standards Division

- ▶ 1-888-315-0110
- ▶ [LabourStandards@novascotia.ca](mailto:LabourStandards@novascotia.ca)

### Nova Scotia Labour, Skills & Immigration – Safety Branch

- ▶ 1-902-424-5400
- ▶ Toll-free: 1-800-952-2687 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- ▶ E-mail: [ohsdivision@novascotia.ca](mailto:ohsdivision@novascotia.ca)

### Nova Scotia Works

- ▶ [Find an employment support centre near you.](#)

### Service Canada

- ▶ [Sign up for a Service Canada account to access Employment Insurance benefits.](#)
- ▶ [Find a Service Canada location near you.](#)