

Human Rights



Human Rights

It is against the law to treat a person differently because of who they are. This is called discrimination. In Nova Scotia and the rest of Canada, the law says you can't be treated differently because of:

- ▶ age
- ▶ race
- ▶ religion
- ▶ where you were born
- ▶ gender
- ▶ sexual orientation
- ▶ disability or health issues
- ▶ family status or marital status
- ▶ how you make money
- ▶ your political beliefs

Everyone in Canada has rights, whether they were born here, moved here, or are visiting. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms says you have the right to:

- ▶ practice any religion
- ▶ speak your mind
- ▶ enter and leave Canada when you want to
- ▶ be treated fairly by the government
- ▶ be treated fairly at school, at work, and by the police

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

LIMITS ON YOUR RIGHTS

Everyone has the right to say and do what they want in Canada, but there are some limits on this. You aren't allowed to break the law, and your behaviour can't hurt other people. An example of this is freedom of speech. The law says you can say what you think or believe, but you can't encourage someone to be violent or to discriminate against others.

"Hate speech" and "hate crimes" means attacking people because of things like race or religion. It might happen in person or online. If you are a victim of hate speech, you can report it to police or file a complaint with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission.

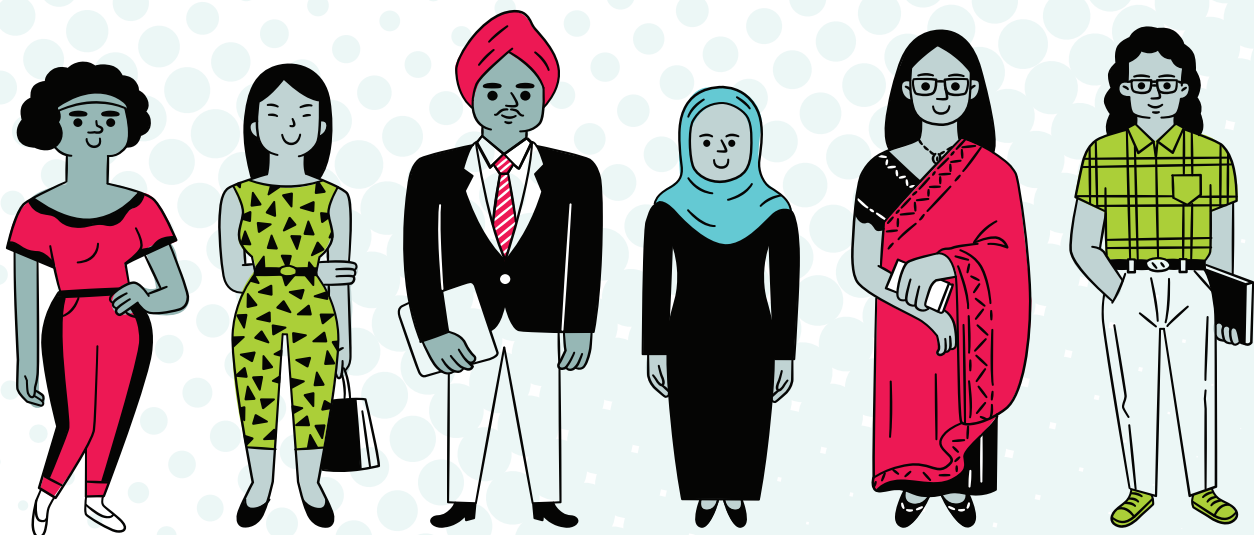
Some rights can also be put on hold if there is an emergency. If there is a forest fire or flood, the government can tell people not to travel until it is safe. The government can also tell people to do things that help protect everyone, like wearing a mask in public places during a pandemic.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE DISCRIMINATES AGAINST YOU

Some examples of discrimination are:

- ▶ firing someone from a job because they are pregnant
- ▶ not renting an apartment to someone because they are gay or transgender
- ▶ racial profiling or street checks (police stopping someone because they aren't white)
- ▶ paying a woman less than a man who is doing the same job

If someone discriminates against you at school or at work, you can talk to a teacher or your manager. If someone in your apartment building is harassing you, you can tell your landlord. If that doesn't help, or if you don't have a safe person to talk to, you can think about filing a human rights complaint with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. **You must file this complaint within one year.**



If someone is harassing you or discriminating against you online, you can get help from CyberScan. This is a free service offered by the government of Nova Scotia to help people who face cyberbullying. CyberScan staff can talk with the person who is bullying you to try to sort out the problem. They talk to the person, give advice, negotiate and mediate between the two of you. You don't have to take part if you don't want to. (The bully also doesn't have to take part, but then the police might charge them with a crime.) CyberScan can also answer your questions about the Nova Scotia justice system.

If someone makes you feel unsafe, you can report their behaviour to the police. You have the right to feel safe at all times, whether you are at home, at school or work, or in public.

WHAT IF THE POLICE DISCRIMINATE AGAINST ME?

If you think the police have stopped you, searched you, or arrested you because of discrimination, talk to a lawyer. You can also file a complaint against the police. There is a deadline of one year to file a complaint.

There is information about how to file a complaint against the police at the end of the section on Criminal Law.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU FILE A HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLAINT?

If you are under 19, you need a parent or guardian to submit a complaint for you.

When you file a complaint with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, you fill out a form that asks:

- ▶ who you are
- ▶ who you are complaining about
- ▶ what happened
- ▶ why you think it was because of your personal characteristics

It is very important to keep copies of any online posts, texts, emails, photos, or videos that help tell your story or show what happened.

You and the other person will both have a chance to explain your versions of what happened. You might be asked to come to a meeting called a settlement meeting. This is a chance for you and the other person to agree on a solution.

If you can't agree, there might be a hearing, which is like a court trial. It's called a tribunal hearing. A tribunal member (who is like a judge) will hear your case. They will decide if there was discrimination or not. If there was discrimination, the tribunal will decide what happens next. This might include things like the other person giving you your job back if they fired you unfairly. They might also have to pay you money to make up for the harm they caused.

OTHER WAYS OF SOLVING HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS

Sometimes people decide not to talk to the Human Rights Commission or the police, even if they experience discrimination. They might feel anxious, or might not want to think about what happened anymore.

If you experience discrimination and aren't sure what to do, some options are:

- ▶ talk to a trusted adult
- ▶ talk to a friend
- ▶ talk to a counsellor or therapist
- ▶ get advice from a lawyer
- ▶ think about talking to a reporter

Remember that it is never your fault if someone discriminates against you. It is up to you how you want to deal with what happened.



Resources

- ▶ [Read more about human rights law in Nova Scotia.](#)
- ▶ [Read more about children's rights in Canada.](#)

Canadian Human Rights Commission

- ▶ [Learn more about your rights in Canada.](#)

Canadian Museum for Human Rights

- ▶ [Learn about the history of human rights in Canada.](#)

Disability Rights Coalition of Nova Scotia

- ▶ [Read more about disability rights.](#)

Persons with Disabilities Resources: Rights & Legislation

A guide from the Nova Scotia Community College

Accessibility Nova Scotia

- ▶ <https://accessible.novascotia.ca>

African Nova Scotian Justice Institute

- ▶ www.ansji.ca

Human Rights Handbook for First Nations

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia

- ▶ <https://isans.ca>

Inclusion Nova Scotia

Help for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

- ▶ 1.844.469.1174
- ▶ inform@inclusionns.ca

Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative

- ▶ <https://mikmaqrights.com/#home>

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

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

Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project

Helping 2SLGBTQIA+ people be included, valued, and celebrated.

- ▶ <https://nsrap.ca>

reachAbility

Help for people with disabilities. Monday–Friday, 8am–4pm

- ▶ Email: info@reachability.org
- ▶ (902) 429-5878