

Month In Review – Nova Scotia



LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Workplace Injuries

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).

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 17: Nova Scotia officially adopted its first of 6 accessibility standards, the Built Environment Accessibility Standard, establishing rules for indoor and outdoor spaces, workplaces, 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: Find out how accessibility laws affect your OHS program and how to ensure your workplace emergency response plan accounts for the disabled.

New Laws

Mar 5: First of its kind legislation, [Bill 36](#), *The Free Trade and Mobility within Canada Act*, which is through Second Reading, would pave the way for 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

Feb 18: First Reading for Private Member [Bill 9](#), the *Atlantic Canada Interprovincial Trade Barriers Reduction Act*, which would give Nova Scotia 6 months to notify the other Atlantic Provinces of its desire to establish an interprovincial trade agreement ensuring that each Atlantic Province treats businesses, investors, and workers of the other Atlantic Provinces at least as favourably as it treats its own businesses, investors, and workers and harmonize their trade regulations.

Industry Challenges

Feb 20: Nova Scotia beef producers can now get financial protection through the Maritime Livestock Price Insurance Pilot Program. Under this new regional initiative slated to run until March 26, producers may purchase price protection on beef cattle in the form of an insurance policy to protect against unexpected market declines. The federal government and participating provinces will share the costs of administering the Program.

Industry Challenges

Feb 24: The Government of Canada announced that it will pony up \$34.1 million to upgrade, reconstruct, repair, and ensure the safety of wharfs and other critical harbour infrastructure including electrical upgrades in 4 Nova Scotia Harbours: Louisbourg, Glace Bay, Upper Whitehead, and Grand Étang.

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.

Workplace Violence

Feb 19: Nova Scotia is increasing paid domestic violence leave from 3 to 5 days, effective April 1. 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 an effective [domestic violence prevention and response policy](#) at your workplace.

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: Take 5 steps to [prevent workplace smoking](#) and vaping and avoid fines under smoke-free 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.

Workers' Comp

Mar 31: That's the deadline for Nova Scotia employers to submit their workers' comp payroll reports to the WCB listing their actual numbers from 2024 and projected numbers for 2025

to avoid potential late fees, interest and penalties.

Return To Work

Apr 28: That's the deadline [to comment](#) on [proposed WCB regulations](#) implementing the new joint duty to cooperate in the return to work process. Effective July 15, employers and injured workers must: i. contact each other and maintain communication; ii. identify suitable and available work for the worker; and iii. provide the WCB information on RTW efforts.

Action Point: Find out how to implement a legally sound [Return to Work Compliance Game Plan](#) for injured workers.

Workers' Comp

Feb 1: To improve service and consistency, the WCB will from now on process regular monthly pension benefit payments to injured workers on the first Wednesday of each month. Most recipients can expect to see funds in their account 1 to 3 business days after this date, depending on their bank's processing times.

Environmental

Mar 7: Nova Scotia proposed new maximum allowable setbacks for wind turbines in municipalities. Under the amended regulations, the setback may be no more than 4 times the turbine height, unless a greater distance is required to ensure that sound levels don't exceed 40 decibels at the exterior of a dwelling and that shadow flicker on nearby residential dwellings doesn't exceed listed limits.

CASES

Work Injuries: 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].

Traffic Control: Employer Didn't Use Due Diligence to Comply with Traffic Control Rules

OHS inspectors issued 6 administrative monetary penalties totaling \$9,000 against a traffic control services provider for failing to meet the minimum standards of the *Temporary Workplace Traffic Control Manual*. The Nova Scotia labour upheld the penalties finding that the violations occurred, and that the employer didn't exercise reasonable due diligence to prevent them and ensure compliance [[Site 2020 Incorporated \(Re\)](#), 2025 NSLB 28 (CanLII), February 27, 2025].

Action Point: Does your company's OHS program meet the standards of due diligence? You can make a better informed judgment on that crucial question by checking out the OHS Insider's [Annual Due Diligence Scorecard for 2024](#), which

breaks down all of the year's OHS court rulings, explaining what employers who won did right and employers who lost did wrong and how to apply these real-life lessons to your own OHS program.

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