

**Preventing  
Harassment in the  
Workplace**

*Public Engagement  
Guide*

October 2023



## We want to hear from you

Government wants to hear from Nova Scotians on what may be needed to help prevent and respond to harassment in the workplace.

Currently, Nova Scotia's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHS Act) and regulations considers physical injuries in the workplace, but do not clearly consider psychological injuries like workplace harassment. We recognize that a workplace free from harassment is important to the overall health and safety of workers. You can help by providing valued input on this important topic to improve workplace health and safety for all Nova Scotians.

### What is the engagement about?

The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration is seeking input from interested parties across Nova Scotia regarding workplace harassment; how it can be prevented; and, if it happens, how to appropriately respond.

### What is workplace harassment?

For this engagement, we are using the Human Rights Act and the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission definition of harassment which is “a course of vexatious conduct or comment that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome” .

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission also says “harassment can involve any unwanted physical or verbal behavior or treatment that is demeaning, disrespectful, offensive or humiliating” .

### Why have the engagements now?

With more focus on workplace mental health, prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting labour trends, there is an increased need to look at harassment at work in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHS Act) and regulations considers physical injuries in the workplace, but do not clearly psychological injuries like harassment in the workplace.

### What does the engagement hope to achieve?

The information gathered during these engagements will be used to support the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration in developing options to help develop guidance for workplaces in preventing and responding to harassment at work. This will be an important step to improve health and safety in the workplaces across Nova Scotia.

### What are the specific issues that the engagement seeks to explore?

These engagement sessions seek to better understanding on the following issues:

- Clarity within the *OHS Act* to define roles and responsibilities of employers and workers concerning harassment in the workplace.

- How government can support employers to help prevent and manage harassment in workplaces.
- Nova Scotia is the only province in Canada that does not have specific health and safety policy, legislation, or regulations related to harassment in the workplace. This is an opportunity to create clarity on roles and responsibilities in workplaces across Nova Scotia.

## Are there specific people to be consulted?

All Nova Scotians are welcome and invited to participate in the engagement.

## What is the desired outcome of the engagement?

Government wants to hear from Nova Scotians on what can help prevent and respond to harassment in the workplace.

Input gathered during these engagement sessions, led by a third-party consultant will be reviewed by the Department of Labour, Skills, and Immigration.

## How can we provide input on harassment as a workplace hazard and how workplaces can address it?

The Safety Branch is inviting employers and workers to attend either virtual or in-person sessions. These sessions are open to everyone. If someone is unable to attend virtually or in-person, there is a survey available on this website.

## How can we contact you if we have further questions?

The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration can be contacted via email at [safetyengagement@novascotia.ca](mailto:safetyengagement@novascotia.ca).