

Duty to Cooperate

Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee

Key Messages

Legislation: Effective July 15, 2025

/// We all want the same thing: Nova Scotians working.

Duty to Cooperate introduces accountability in the return-to-work (RTW) equation. It helps keep everyone working together towards a common goal — getting Nova Scotians back to work safely and successfully.

What is **Duty to Cooperate** all about?

In many cases, people can continue working after a workplace injury. But when time away from work is needed, employers are required to keep injured workers connected and supported in their safe and timely return to work.

Workers, employers, service providers, and WCB Nova Scotia (WCB) all have a role to play. Duty to Cooperate legislation, introduced by the Government of Nova Scotia, enables WCB to hold ourselves and others accountable to achieve better return-to-work outcomes for workers and employers.

As part of their responsibilities, employers and workers must:

- Contact each other as soon as possible after an injury occurs.
- Maintain communication throughout recovery and full return to work
- Establish and participate in return-to-work plans
- Discuss worker's skills and abilities to find safe, suitable work
- Provide WCB with information about return to work

Why is this change important?

- Promotes collaboration between employers, workers, WCB and health care providers.
- Keeps workers connected to their workplace. Evidence shows that work-connected recovery increases physical, psychological and financial outcomes for workers.
- Encourages clear communication, faster decision-making, and eliminates unnecessary delays in the worker returning to work.
- Helps create healthier workplaces where injured workers feel supported and valued.
- Aligns Nova Scotia with other provinces that have similar cooperation requirements.

What does this mean for JOHSC members?

As members of your Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC), you are key to building awareness and reinforcing these principles across your organization.

This can include:

- Sharing messages at committee meetings and across your workplace.

* We've included key messages below!

- Encouraging positive attitudes toward recovery and return to work.
- Supporting your organization in understanding their legal responsibilities.
- Promoting a solutions-focused approach to RTW discussions.
- Where appropriate, helping your employer plan for accommodations and alternate work for employees who are injured at work.

* Key messages:

- We're all responsible for helping injured workers return to work safely.
- Duty to Cooperate is a legal obligation—and also a smart way to support recovery.
- Everyone benefits when Nova Scotians are safe and working.
- Communication is key to successful return to work.
- Let's focus on what the worker *can do*—not just what they can't.
- Let's get creative in finding work that matches the worker's skills and abilities.
- Clear communication and early planning prevent unnecessary delays in return to work—which helps recovery for the worker.

Key Takeaway:

Duty to Cooperate is not just about compliance—it's about accountability and shared responsibility between the worker, the employer, and WCB to support injured Nova Scotians as they recover and return to work. JOHSC members can lead the way in building that culture one conversation at a time.

Learn More

Visit wcb.ns.ca/DutytoCooperate for more resources, including webinar recordings, Q&As and more.

Contact us

Do you have questions about preparing for Duty to Cooperate legislation? We're here to help.

Contact us at dutytocooperate@wcb.ns.ca and someone will be in touch.

**WORK SAFE.
FOR LIFE.**

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD OF NOVA SCOTIA

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