

Public Services Sustainability Act

Government is committed to both meaningful collective bargaining and to preserving the public services Nova Scotians need.

This legislation implements the Public Service Sustainability Mandate, which was introduced by the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board in August 2015.

The Public Services Sustainability Act:

- Respects collective bargaining rights.
- Ensures other matters outside the wage framework – such as working conditions – remain negotiable.
- Ensures all Nova Scotia public-sector employees are respected and treated the same way, in a manner that is both fair to employees, and affordable for taxpayers.
- This legislation provides public-sector employers with a framework for the new money they can offer for wages. This will allow the province to continue to invest in the services that matter to Nova Scotians.
- The Framework features:
 - Annual increments or step increases continuing for eligible employees. This means newer, lower paid employees will receive larger wage increases. Some will see annual increases as high as five per cent.
 - The wage framework will be 0, 0, 1.0, 1.5, and .5% on the last day of the agreement.
 - Under the Act, public-sector employees who are eligible for retirement allowances will receive the benefit accumulated up to April 2015. Retirement allowances are a one-time payment, made when a public-sector employee retires.
- Encourages public-sector employers and unions to work together to find savings – a portion of which could then be applied to further wage increases.
- Applies to all bargaining units except those that have concluded negotiated collective agreements prior to the Act coming into force.
- Protects pensions, benefits, and vacation time.
- Ensures taxpayers are protected from arbitration decisions that could be higher than what is affordable as set out in the fiscal plan. In recent years, arbitration decisions have cost taxpayers millions of dollars. These decisions were imposed by third parties who did not consider the province's ability to pay.

Information on the Public Service Sustainability Mandate and updates on public-sector bargaining can be found at novascotia.ca/PublicServiceSustainability

Questions & Answers

Public Services Sustainability Act

Q. What is the purpose of the Public Services Sustainability Act?

A. The Act allows Nova Scotia to maintain important public services while providing a compensation framework to public-sector employees that is fair to them and affordable for taxpayers. The legislation implements the Public Service Sustainability Mandate, which was introduced by the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board in August 2015.

Q. How does the Act protect collective bargaining rights for unionized public-sector employees?

A. Contractual matters – such as working conditions – remain negotiable, and the Act puts a framework in place regarding the new money employers can offer for wages.

Q. What is the wage package?

A. The compensation framework will be 0, 0, 1.0, 1.5, and .5% on the last day of the agreement.

Q. Will my benefits and pensions be affected by this legislation?

A. The Public Service Sustainability Act protects pensions, benefits, and vacation time.

Q. Will there be any other salary increases for unionized public sector employees?

A. Yes, “step” increases will remain in place for some public-sector employees, including teachers. Under many union contracts, public-sector employees “step” or move into new wage categories annually until they reach the top of the pay scale for their position.

Q. Does the wage package apply to all public-sector bargaining units?

A. The Act applies to all bargaining units except those that ratify collective agreements prior to the Act coming into force. Parts of the Act may not have to be proclaimed into law if agreements are ratified first.

Q. Does the wage package apply to other public-sector employees?

A. The wage package applies to all public-sector employees in Nova Scotia, unionized and non-unionized. The Act also applies to all public service agencies and crown corporations, and their employees.

Q. Why does a set wage package have to be put in place?

A. The compensation framework protects Nova Scotian taxpayers from arbitrated wage settlements higher than those set out in the province’s fiscal plan. In recent years, arbitration decisions have cost taxpayers millions of dollars. These decisions were imposed on the province by third parties who were not required to consider ability to pay.

Q. How does the legislation affect public-service awards?

A. Under the Act, public-sector employees who are eligible for retirement allowances will receive the benefit accumulated up to April 2015.

Q. Does the Act change the relationship between public-sector employees and their employers?

A. This Act encourages public-service employers and unions to jointly find savings, a portion of which could be applied to further wage increases.

Q. Where can Nova Scotians find more information on the Public Service Sustainability Mandate?

A. At novascotia.ca/PublicServiceSustainability