



PRESS RELEASE

New report finds significant barriers to unionization in Nova Scotia, calls for changes

September 22nd, 2026

HALIFAX/KJIPUKTUK – Workers have a Charter-protected right to unionize. However, the right to unionize is not meaningful if workers face excessive delays, fear retaliation, or have their bargaining position weakened before the process is complete. And yet in Nova Scotia, these are some of the findings in a new report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Nova Scotia (CCPA-NS). The new report finds that the process of unionizing in Nova Scotia comes with significant barriers throughout the entire unionization process – from employees expressing their support for a union to bargaining their first contract.

This report draws from interviews with union organizers, labour activists, union-side employment lawyers, and academics, and undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the state of unionization in Nova Scotia, and compares Nova Scotia's legislation and regulations around the unionization process to other jurisdictions across Canada.

Ruby Harrington, co-author and CCPA-NS staff says, "Compared to some other jurisdictions, and even compared to the construction industry's process in Nova Scotia, our findings point to specific procedural choices that can prolong certification, including the mandatory vote system, treatment of disputed ballots, as well as limits on access to first-contract arbitration. Both employers and workers deserve a fair process that is timely, and one that is capable of protecting workers' choices."

Co-author, and Acadia University professor, **Dr. Rachel Brickner** says, "The barriers are not simply technical or procedural. Workers may be afraid of losing their jobs, newcomers may worry about their immigration status, and precarious workers may be dealing with high turnover, multiple worksites, or limited opportunities to meet with organizers. These conditions make exercising the right to unionize much more difficult."





Kat Daly, SEIU shelter worker at the Bridge, which was recently unionized, said this about the recommendations, “A big part of our job as shelter workers is showing up with compassion and care, which means we need to be able to take care of ourselves too. We decided we wanted to unionize to make improvements to our workplace and our working conditions. That process should be accessible, timely, and transparent.”

Co-author and Acadia University professor, **Dr. Rebecca Casey**, says, “Our research shows that unionization in Nova Scotia is a lengthy, multi-step process with barriers at every stage. This research underlines why delays and uncertainty can weaken organizing campaigns, reduce worker support, and give employers more time to interfere. The research also underlines why streamlining the process with a card-check or single-step certification is critical.”

Christine Saulnier, Director of the CCPA-NS, says of this report: “As part of creating decent work conditions, unionization matters greatly. Unions give workers a collective voice to negotiate better wages, paid leave, job security, and safer and more respectful workplaces. These improvements do not benefit workers alone. Unionized workers have more secure and adequate incomes, enabling them to better support their families, participate in their communities, and contribute to a stronger economy. Making it easier to unionize should be a priority for the government.”

Melissa Marsman, President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, had this to say, “This report confirms what workers already know, the rules are stacked against employees looking to form a union.” She continued, “Unions mean higher wages, better benefits and stronger job security for workers. If we are to achieve the economic growth the government has repeatedly promised, we cannot continue to deny these benefits to the working people of Nova Scotia.”

[“One of the hardest places to organize in the country”: Understanding and overcoming barriers to unionization in Nova Scotia](#) by Rachel K. Brickner, Rebecca Casey, Ruby Harrington and Daniel Cerdas Sandí is available on the CCPA website.

The accompanying [jurisdictional scan](#), which compares the legislation and regulations for unionization across Canada, can also be found on the CCPA website.



Press Conference

We will be co-hosting a press conference for this report with the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour today, where the authors of the report will be present. We invite media to join us at Halifax Grande Parade on September 22nd at 10am.

When: September 22nd, 10 am

Where: Halifax Grande Parade, 1841 Argyle St, Halifax, NS B3J 3A5 (Rain place: Canadian Labour Congress, 1718 Argyle St.)

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For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact: Ruby Harrington at ccpans@policyalternatives.ca or (902) 956-3866.

The CCPA is an independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with issues of social and economic justice, as well as environmental sustainability.