

Northwest Territories

LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Workplace Violence

Jul 22: New family violence protections took effect in Northwest Territories. In addition to banning stalking, the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* now covers intimate personal relationships, family relationships, and care relationships. It also includes a new “deemed fear” provision to protect children and other vulnerable people who may be unable to express concerns about their safety.

Action Point: Family violence becomes an OHS compliance issue when it happens at the victim’s workplace. Bottom Line: You must incorporate protections against workplace domestic violence into your workplace violence prevention plan. Find out how to implement an effective [Workplace Domestic Violence Prevention Plan](#) to protect your own workers.

Machine Safety

Jul 1: The Workers’ Safety & Compensation Commission (WSCC) issued new [guidance](#) to help employers prevent “struck-by” incidents, which happen when workers come into contact with a moving object, tool, or piece of equipment. In 2025, workers’ compensation claims for struck-by injuries in Northwest Territories and Nunavut most often involved construction workers, carpenters, mine workers, maintenance workers, nurses, and people who stock shelves.

Action Point: Find out how to prevent struck-by injuries by implementing a legally sound [Machine Guarding Compliance Game Plan at](#) your workplace.

Infectious Illness

Jul 9: The Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) confirmed a case of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), aka bird flu, in a herring gull in Fort Smith. The transmission risk to humans remains very low. There have been 16 confirmed cases of HPAI in birds in the Northwest Territories since 2022.

Action Point: Find out how to use the [OHS Insider Infection Exposure Control Plan](#) template to prevent HPAI, COVID, and other infectious illness outbreaks at your workplace.

New Laws

Jul 27: The Governments of Canada and Northwest Territories signed two agreements that will provide over \$655 million to the territories for development of housing and infrastructure. Approximately \$480 million will go to new housing, including at least 380 social housing units, approximately 130 affordable housing units, and 50 transitional or supportive housing units. The GNWT will also get up to \$82.4 million to support infrastructure projects related to housing and post-

secondary education over 10 years.

New Laws

Jul 31: From now through August 30, the GNWT will conduct a [survey](#) on how to improve to improve government support, funding, and programming to the business community. Survey data will also help the GNWT gain a better understanding of Northwest Territories trade, business readiness for upcoming federal government investments, and opportunities for growth.

New Laws

Jul 15: The GNWT took over responsibility for Ekati Mine in Receivership. The move comes after a court-supervised restructuring and sale process initiated by Arctic Canadian Diamond Company Ltd. and Burgundy Diamonds (Canada) Ltd. under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* failed to provide a viable solution to allow continued operation of the Ekati mine. Since the companies can't afford to operate it, the GNWT will take over the mine.

New Laws

Jul 8: The federal Francophone Immigration Support Program is providing \$860,000 for a new project to increase Northwest Territories' French-speaking population. The money will be used to improve access to information on immigration, raise awareness of the Northwest Territories Nominee Program and other federal immigration programs, support recognition of foreign credentials held by temporary residents, and strengthen employer involvement in immigration processes in communities outside Yellowknife.

Drugs & Alcohol

Jul 22: The GNWT and Nunavut decided not to sign the new Canada-wide agreement allowing for direct-to-consumer (DTC) sales of alcohol products across provincial and territorial boundaries citing "unique realities." While both territories support the principles of internal free trade, allowing DTC sales would undermine local alcohol restrictions or prohibitions "that reflect community priorities and cultural values."

Workers' Compensation

August 10: August 10 is the final day to submit [applications](#) to the Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission (WSCC) for Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Funding Program support. The agency will distribute between \$5,000 to \$250,000 per year, per initiative, to service providers that help Northwest Territories and Nunavut employers improve workplace safety and comply with OHS requirements.

Return-To-Work

Aug 5: The WSCC completed review of proposed changes to Policy 05.02, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Programs. Under current policy, vocational rehabilitation begins with vocational exploration, which is used to develop a vocational rehabilitation plan identifying the injured worker's return-to-work goals and establishing time frames to obtain suitable work and/or regain employability. The Board of Directors will vote on policy changes at its upcoming governance meeting in September.

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

Environmental

Jul 16: The GNWT and Canada Water Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to advance protection and stewardship of freshwater ecosystems across the territories. The two-year MOU establishes a framework for cooperation on issues affecting northern waters and recognizes the unique position of the Northwest Territories as the ultimate downstream jurisdiction within the Mackenzie River Basin.

CASES

Workplace Harassment: Labour Arbitrator, Not Court Must Decide Union Employee's Harassment Claim

A unionized government employee filed a workplace harassment lawsuit against his employer in court. The government agency contended that the claim was essentially a labour dispute over which the court had no jurisdiction. The Northwest Territories court agreed and dismissed the claim. The core of the claim was the employee's allegation that the employer violated its duty under the collective agreement to provide a harassment-free workplace. As such, it was a labour dispute that had to be decided by labour arbitration rather than a civil lawsuit [[Acorn v GNWT](#), 2026 NWTSC 41 (CanLII), July 21, 2026].

Action Point: Don't assume workers will tell you if they're being harassed. Use the OHS Insider [Assessment Questionnaire template](#) to uncover hidden harassment, bullying, and stalking problems at your workplace.