



# Harassment and Discrimination

## Does This Article Apply To You?

This article is about tenants' rights under the *Residential Tenancies Act (RTA)* and the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*. These laws apply to most rental housing in Nova Scotia, such as rooms, apartments, houses, mobile home parks, and retirement homes.

But some types of residences are **not covered** by the *RTA*. For example, university residencies, hospitals, maternity homes, nursing homes, residential care facilities.

If your housing is not covered by the *RTA*, this information does not apply to you. Find information on how to contact your local Legal Aid Office for legal advice and/or information and other community resources here: [Contacts](#)

## Harassment

### VERY IMPORTANT

Harassment and discrimination can sometimes be hard to prove. It is a very good idea to keep notes about what has happened, when it happened and what steps you took, and who was involved.

It is illegal for your landlord, or anyone acting for your landlord, such as a superintendent or property manager, to harass you. If another tenant is harassing you, your landlord must do something to stop it.

There are many different kinds of harassment. For example, your landlord might harass you by:

- Cutting off important services, such as heat, or electricity;
- Knocking on your door or phoning you at unreasonable times;
- Taking your things because you owe rent;
- Entering your home without giving you proper notice;
- Locking you out or changing your lock without giving you a key;
- Making sexual suggestions or advances knowing that you do not want them;
- Trying to stop you from organizing or being active in a tenants' association; or
- Threatening to do any of the things listed above, or threatening to harm you.

Sometimes landlords harass tenants to try to get them to move out so a new tenant can move in and pay more rent. Sometimes harassment is a way to discriminate against tenants or to stop them from standing up for their rights.

## **What You Can Do About Harassment**

Harassment can be hard to prove. It is a good idea to keep notes about what is happening. Here are some steps you can take.

### **1. Call the Police**

If the harassment is very severe or your landlord threatens to harm you, you SHOULD call the police. Use the non-emergency number for your local police department, unless someone's life or safety is in danger. The non-emergency number for the Halifax Police is 902-490-5020.

## 2. File an Application with Residential Tenancies

You can file an "Application to Director" to Residential Tenancies.

Residential Tenancies resolves disputes between landlords and tenants and enforces their rights. You and the landlord will meet with a Residential Tenancy Officer who will hold a hearing if needed. The Residential Tenancy Officer will ask both you and the landlord if you want to try and settle the conflict through mediation.

If you or the landlord does not think it can be settled or you cannot reach an agreement, the Residential Tenancy Officer will then hear from each of you and look at any evidence you bring to the hearing including statements of witnesses, pictures, video, receipts, notes, emails, statements, etc. and will make a decision.

You will also have the opportunity to ask your landlord questions.

### **IMPORTANT**

Your landlord might deny that the harassment happened. So, it is important that you bring evidence that supports your complaint. Bring to the hearing:

- Any documents, recordings, or photos you have;
- Any witnesses who can confirm what happened;
- Any notes you made at the time the harassment was happening.

After the hearing if the Residential Tenancy Officer agrees that your landlord harassed you, the Residential Tenancy Officer can order your landlord to do things such as:

- Stop harassing you;
- Let you move without giving notice, if you want to do that;
- Pay you some money, for any loss you have suffered or will suffer as a direct result of the landlord's behaviour.

## **What You Can Do About Discrimination**

If your landlord or anyone acting for your landlord discriminates against you then they may be breaking the *Human Rights Act*.

However, if someone who you live with, or who lives in your building or neighbourhood is harassing you, or being discriminatory then you should call the **non-emergency police number**: 902-490-5020 (Halifax). Find information on how to contact your local Legal Aid Office for legal advice and/or information and other resources here: [Contacts](#)

Sometimes discrimination is direct. For example, a landlord might treat you badly because of your colour or religion. Or, a landlord might make unwanted sexual advances.

Other kinds of discrimination are less direct. For example, a landlord might refuse to put in a ramp or make other changes for a tenant who uses a wheelchair. There might be strict rules about noise that are harder for people with children to follow.

Or, a landlord might refuse to rent to people who have no credit rating. This can be a problem for young people and for people who are new to Canada. Landlords who will not change things like

these to meet the needs of tenants could be discriminating against those tenants.

### 3. **Make a Complaint to the Human Rights Commission**

The Human Rights Commission is an office of the Government of Nova Scotia. It is an independent agency created to administer Nova Scotia's *Human Rights Act*, help build inclusive communities and protect human rights. If you believe your landlord is discriminating against you with respect to housing, you can make a complaint with Human Rights.

You will need to contact Human Rights. Human Rights will also contact the landlord for information and may make efforts to resolve the complaint. However, you must first file a written complaint, and then Human Rights will ask you and the landlord to take part in a Resolution Conference to see if an agreement can be worked out. If an agreement cannot be worked out, Human Rights will often consider other forms of mediation or investigation to deal with the complaint.

For more information, you can contact the Human Rights Commission by email at [hrcinquiries@gov.ns.ca](mailto:hrcinquiries@gov.ns.ca) or call Toll free: 1-877-269-7699 or Halifax: 902-424-4111

#### **VERY IMPORTANT**

Harassment and discrimination can sometimes be hard to prove. It is a very good idea to keep notes about what has happened. Some cases of discrimination can be dealt with by an Application to the Director. In other situations, you may make a complaint to the Human Rights Commission, and in some situations it is best to call the police.

## **Where to Get Help and Information**

### **Nova Scotia Legal Aid**

If you are a tenant with low income, contact your Nova Scotia Legal Aid Office for advice and/or assistance. You can find your local Nova Scotia Legal Aid Office by looking under “Lawyers” in your phone book. You can also check the Nova Scotia Legal Aid website at [Legal Aid Offices \(www.nslegalaid.ca\)](http://www.nslegalaid.ca) or phone:

Toll Free: 1-866-420-3450

Halifax: 1-902-420-3450

### **Access Nova Scotia (Residential Tenancies)**

Website: [Access Nova Scotia - Residential Tenancies](http://www.accessnova Scotia.ca)

Toll Free: 1-800-670-4357

Halifax: 1-902-424-5200

TTY: 1-877-404-0867

### **Dalhousie Legal Aid Service (DLAS)**

Website: [DLAS](http://www.dlas.ca)

Halifax: 1-902-423-8105

### **Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia**

You may be able to get free advice about your family law issue from a lawyer for up to 20 minutes. This service is provided over the phone. Call the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia at 902-455-3135, to find out if you qualify for this service.

Website: [LISNS](http://www.lisns.ca)

Toll Free: 1-800-665-9779 (within Nova Scotia)

Halifax: 1-902-455-3135

Email: [questions@legalinfo.org](mailto:questions@legalinfo.org)

## **Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

Website: [Human Rights Commission](#)

Toll Free: 1-877-269-7699

Halifax: 1-902-424-4111

TTY: 1-902-424-3139

Email: [hrcinquires@gov.ns.ca](mailto:hrcinquires@gov.ns.ca)

## **Small Claims Court**

Website: [The Courts of Nova Scotia - Small Claims Court](#)

Halifax: 1-902-424-8722

TTY: 1-902-424-0551

## **Dial-a-Law**

Website: [Dial-a-Law | How LISNS Can Help](#)

**Not** Toll Free: 1-902-420-1888.

## **Sheriff's Office (Halifax)**

Telephone: 1-902-424 8212

1815 Upper Water Street, Halifax Nova Scotia.

## **Police – Non-Emergency (Halifax)**

1-902-490-5020

## **211 Nova Scotia**

Website: [Homepage - 211 Nova Scotia](#)

Toll Free: 1-855-466-4994

**Disclaimer:** This site contains general legal information for residents of Nova Scotia, Canada. It is not intended to be used as legal advice for a specific legal problem.