



## ***Workplace Discrimination, Wage Rights & Economic Justice (2026 Edition)***

*(Based on Educaloi 2022 “It Is OK to Speak Up: Know Your Rights in the Workplace,” updated to 2026 standards)*

### **1. Introduction**

Young workers often enter the workforce with limited knowledge of their rights. This makes them vulnerable to:

- Wage theft
- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Unsafe working conditions
- Exploitation
- Power imbalances with employers

This toolkit helps youth understand:

- Their rights under Québec’s Act Respecting Labour Standards
- What discrimination looks like in the workplace
- How wage disparities happen, and how to challenge them
- How to recognize harassment
- How to file complaints and seek support
- How to navigate unfair treatment
- How to advocate for themselves and others

### **2. The Act Respecting Labour Standards (Québec)**

The Act Respecting Labour Standards sets minimum protections for workers in Québec. Employers can offer more than the minimum, but never less.

This law covers:

- Minimum wage
- Work hours
- Overtime
- Holidays
- Sick leave
- Termination

- Youth employment
- Harassment protections

Any contract that gives a worker **less** than the Act allows is **invalid**.

### 3. Youth Employment Rights (Explained Simply)

#### 3.1 Minimum Age to Work

In Québec:

- **General minimum age:** 14
- **Higher minimum age (15+)** for:
  - Restaurant kitchens
  - Warehouses
  - Meat/produce prep
  - Automotive garages
  - Shipping/receiving

Youth under 14 may work only in limited circumstances (e.g., artistic work with parental consent).

#### 3.2 Minimum Wage (2026)

Workers must be paid **at least** the minimum wage.

Two main categories:

- General minimum wage
- Minimum wage for tipped employees

Students must be paid minimum wage if they:

- Work 28 hours or less during school
- Work during holidays (March break, summer, Christmas, etc.)

#### 3.3 Exceptions to Minimum Wage

Minimum wage does not apply to:

- High school co-op placements
- College/university internships
- Certain professional training (law, medicine, engineering)
- Camp counselors

- Students supervising children

#### **4. Québec Minimum Wage (Effective May 1, 2026)**

##### **4.1. General Minimum Wage**

- \$16.60 per hour

##### **4.2. Minimum Wage for Tipped Employees**

- \$13.30 per hour

##### **4.3 Who Must Be Paid Minimum Wage**

- High school students
- Part-time workers
- Full-time workers
- Seasonal workers
- Retail, restaurant, and service employees
- Youth workers (14+) unless they fall under specific exceptions

##### **4.4 Exceptions (Not Required to Receive Minimum Wage)**

- High school co-op placements
- College/university internships
- Certain professional training (law, medicine, engineering, architecture)
- Camp counselors
- Students supervising children

##### **4.5 Why the Increase?**

- To help low-income workers keep up with inflation
- To balance affordability for small and medium-sized businesses
- To support youth and vulnerable workers

#### **5. Public Holidays & Paid Time Off**

##### **5.1 Québec Public Holidays**

- January 1
- Good Friday or Easter Monday

- National Patriots' Day (May)
- July 1 (or July 2 if July 1 is Sunday)
- Labour Day
- Thanksgiving
- December 25
- June 24: Fête Nationale (special rules)

Workers may:

- Refuse to work (in retail)
- Receive premium pay
- Receive a substitute paid day off

## 6. Sick Days & Leaves

Workers are entitled to:

- 10 unpaid sick days per year
- Protection from being fired for illness
- Extended leave for serious family illness (after 3 months of employment)

## 7. Vacation Rights

- Less than 1 year: 1 day per month worked
- 1–5 years: 2 weeks
- 5+ years: 3 weeks

Most minors working part-time do not qualify for paid vacation.

## 8. Overtime Pay

Overtime begins after 40 hours/week.

Workers receive:

- Time and a half (150% of hourly wage)
- OR equivalent paid time off

## 9. Termination Rights

If employed **3+ months**, workers must receive written notice:

- 3 months–1 year: 1 week
- 1–5 years: 2 weeks

- 5+ years: 4 weeks

If the employer fails to give notice, they must pay the worker instead.

## **10. Contracts & Youth Workers**

Youth under 18 can sign contracts only if:

- The contract benefits them
- It relates to necessities (food, shelter, phone, transportation)

Youth can cancel certain contracts after signing, which is why many companies refuse contracts with minors.

## **11. Wage Theft & Economic Exploitation**

Wage theft includes:

- Not paying minimum wage
- Not paying overtime
- Taking tips
- Forcing unpaid work
- Illegal deductions
- Withholding pay

These practices disproportionately affect:

- Youth
- Immigrants
- Racialized workers
- Temporary workers
- Low-income workers

## **12. Workplace Discrimination**

Discrimination occurs when someone is treated unfairly because of:

- Race
- Gender
- Age
- Religion
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- National origin

- Language
- Social condition

Examples:

- Asking for a photo with a job application
- Asking about religion, marital status, or sexual orientation
- Paying racialized workers less
- Scheduling only certain workers for undesirable shifts
- Firing someone for filing a complaint

These actions violate the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

### **13. Harassment in the Workplace**

Harassment includes:

- Repeated offensive comments
- Sexual comments or touching
- Threats
- Humiliation
- Intimidation
- Hostile work environment

A single serious incident can also be harassment.

Harassment can occur:

- Between coworkers
- Between employer and employee
- Between clients and workers

### **14. Filing a Harassment or Discrimination Complaint**

Workers can:

- Tell their employer
- Contact their union
- Speak to a lawyer
- File a complaint with CNESST (within 90 days)
- File a human rights complaint
- File a police report (for criminal harassment or assault)

CNESST may:

- Offer mediation
- Investigate
- Represent the worker at the Tribunal administratif du travail

## **15. Economic Inequality & Wage Disparities**

Wage disparities often affect:

- Women
- Black workers
- Indigenous workers
- Immigrants
- Temporary foreign workers
- Youth

Causes include:

- Discrimination
- Lack of access to higher-paying jobs
- Language barriers
- Bias in hiring
- Exploitation of young workers
- Lack of union protection

## **16. Scenarios for Discussion**

### **Scenario 1: Wage Theft in a Restaurant**

Aisha works at a café. Her boss regularly asks her to “clock out” before cleaning the kitchen. She is told this is “normal in the industry.”

**Questions:**

- What rights are being violated?
- What should Aisha do?
- Who can she contact?

### **Scenario 2: Racial Pay Disparity**

Two workers, Liam and Malik, were hired the same week for the same job. Liam earns \$2 more per hour. Malik discovers this after seeing a pay stub left on the counter.

**Questions:**

- Is this discrimination?
- What steps can Malik take?
- What evidence does he need?

### **Scenario 3: Sexual Harassment During Training**

A manager repeatedly comments on a 16-year-old trainee's appearance and touches her shoulder during training sessions.

#### **Questions:**

- What laws apply?
- What should she do first?
- How can the workplace be held accountable?

### **Scenario 4: Illegal Interview Questions**

During a job interview, the employer asks:

- "Where are you really from?"
- "Do you plan to have children?"
- "Are you gay?"
- "Can you send a photo?"

#### **Questions:**

- Which questions are illegal?
- What should the applicant do?
- How can they report this?

### **Scenario 5: Threats for Unionizing**

Workers at a warehouse want to form a union. Their employer threatens to cut hours and fire anyone who signs a union card.

#### **Questions:**

- What rights protect these workers?
- What is the role of CNESST?
- What should the workers do next?

### **Scenario 6: Discrimination Against a Worker With a Disability**

Sofia has a chronic illness. When she requests modified duties, her employer reduces her hours and tells her she is “too much trouble.”

**Questions:**

- What human rights are being violated?
- What accommodations must employers provide?
- What recourse does Sofia have?

**16. Glossary (Plain Language)**

**Wage Theft:** When an employer illegally withholds pay.

**Discrimination:** Unfair treatment based on identity.

**Harassment:** Repeated or serious offensive behavior.

**Minimum Wage:** The lowest legal hourly pay.

**Overtime:** Extra pay for extra hours.

**CNESST:** Québec agency that protects workers' rights.

**Termination:** Ending employment.

**Union:** Worker organization that negotiates rights.

**Economic Inequality:** Unequal access to income and opportunity.