

2026 Annual Conference Program

Thursday, September 24, 2026

10:00 am – 5:00 pm **Conference Registration** – *Nova Scotia Foyer*

10:30 am – 12:30 pm **Board of Directors Meeting** – *Atlantic Suite*

12:45 pm – 1:00 pm **Welcome** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*

Vicki Giles, McLennan Ross LLP
Ian Pickard, McInnes Cooper
Sean Kelly, Stewart McKelvey
Kecia Podetz, Emond Harnden LLP

1:00 pm – 2:05 pm **The Current Collective Bargaining Environment: Challenges, Opportunities and Best Practices – William Kaplan** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*

What is the current labour relations climate? That question can be answered with a single word: tough. It is tough out there. Labour expectations are high. That's the rock. Management's desire to constrain costs and make what it believes are necessary structural changes to survive is the hard place. Inflation has begun to ebb (as of early 2026, although that could turn on a dime). At the very least previous inflationary increases are now baked in dramatically affecting the cost of living, and these pressures are understandably driving unions to demand higher wages. But there are other forces at work: employment adjustment, remote work and AI to name just three. In the public sector, there are incredible competing demands for the allocation of public funds. In this keynote address, well-known labour arbitrator and mediator William Kaplan looks at the current collective bargaining environment and, based on experience in some recent high-profile cases, describes some of the challenges, opportunities, and best practices.

2:05 pm – 3:10 pm **The Stress of It All – The Current Landscape and Emerging Issues in Gradual Onset Stress Claims** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*

This 2-part panel will begin with a cross-Canada analysis of workers' compensation gradual onset stress claims with a focus on how such claims are being handled by WCB/WSIB bodies. The panel will then consider some of the jurisdictional issues arising out of gradual onset stress claims including circumstances involving overlapping damages claims arising at grievance arbitrations and in wrongful/constructive dismissal litigation.

3:10 pm – 3:30 pm **Break** – *Nova Scotia Foyer*

3:30 pm – 4:30 pm **OH&S Panel - Knock, Knock, Produce – The Innovative Use of OHS Officers' Powers** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*

This panel examines the use of OHS officers' powers in inspections and investigations across jurisdictions. It highlights the distinction between these processes and how that distinction can impact an employer's obligations and response. The discussion will address key enforcement mechanisms, including document production demands, compliance orders, and the potential use of search warrants. Panelists will also explore

how these powers are being exercised in practice and the challenges they raise for employers. Practical guidance will be provided to help organizations effectively navigate these evolving enforcement realities.

- 4:30 pm – 5:00 pm **Annual General Meeting (all members welcome)** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*
- 5:00 pm – 6:15 pm **“Meet & Greet” Reception - All Welcome – refreshments & canapes** – *Sable Room*
- 6:15 pm **Dinner on Your Own** (we suggest you make reservations in advance - we have a restaurant suggestion guide on our website)
- 8:30 pm **After Dinner Get-together at Bar Stillwell** (1672 Barrington Street)

Friday, September 25, 2026

- 7:30 am – 8:30 am **Continental Breakfast** – *Halifax ABC*
- 8:30 am – 9:35 am **Employment Law Quick Hits** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*

Back again by popular demand, this session will address a curated selection of hot topics in employment law. Topics will include preserving evidence in anticipation of litigation, a discussion of mitigation as a defence strategy for employers, including how it can be effectively deployed to limit exposure as well as considerations surrounding the crystallization and enforceability of settlement agreements.

- 9:35 am – 10:20 am **Corporate Transactions: Red Flag Issues for Buyers and Sellers** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*

When staffed on a corporate transaction, employment lawyers are counted on to add commercial value by helping to appropriately allocate risk, resolve or manage employment and labour issues and lay the groundwork for a successful workplace transition and integration. Often, the instructing client will be corporate counsel or business principals located outside of Canada, so taking a practical and solutions-oriented approach is critical. In this first of a two-part series, we will hear from expert transactional lawyers about how they identify red flag issues at all stages of a deal and provide practical & effective counsel to buyers and sellers on how to mitigate risk (while still getting the deal done!). Quickly and efficiently determining what really “matters” and how to work effectively and constructively with the client, colleagues, co-counsel and opposing parties, while advancing your client’s interests, is an important part of the employment lawyer’s toolkit.

- 10:20 am – 11:05 am **Cross Canada Labour Law Update – Part 1** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*

Expect practical takeaways, surprising rulings, legislative shake ups, and maybe even a few “wait, they decided what?!” moments. Whether you’re navigating unions, bargaining tables, workplace trends, or just trying to keep up with the rapidly evolving legal landscape, this session will give you the cross Canada clarity you need—minus the winter travel delays.

- 11:05 am – 11:25 am **Break** – *Nova Scotia Foyer*

11:25 pm – 12:15 pm **Cross Canada Labour Law Update – Part 2** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*

12:15 pm – 1:45 pm **Lunch** - *Halifax ABC*

1:45 pm – 2:45 pm **Executive Employment – Incentive Compensation** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*

This panel will address current and emerging issues related to incentive compensation including LTIP, STIP and RSUs. Following an analysis of recent case-law on performance-based and contingent compensation, the panel will discuss practical and strategic considerations when managing disputes or litigating incentive compensation-based claims.

2:45 pm – 3:00 pm **Advocacy Committee Update** – *Nova Scotia ABCD*

3:00 pm – 3:20 pm **Break** – *Nova Scotia Foyer*

3:20 pm – 4:30 pm **Breakout Session 1 – Poking Around, Properly: Ethical and Practical Considerations in Lawyers Conducting Investigations for Clients** - *Nova Scotia ABCD*

Employer counsel are increasingly asked to design, direct, or conduct workplace investigations, placing lawyers squarely at the intersection of legal advice, fact finding, and risk management. That role raises unique ethical and practical questions that do not always have clear answers. This session examines where the boundaries lie when lawyers become investigators, and how to navigate common pressure points without compromising independence, privilege, fairness, or credibility. Using interactive “real life” (to some degree!) case studies, panelists will explore issues such as scope setting, information gathering, witness interviews, privilege strategy, and the downstream use of investigation findings in litigation or arbitration. Come prepared to discuss!

Breakout Session 2 – When Opposing Counsel Isn’t Counsel: Strategies for Cases with Self-Represented Parties - *Halifax ABC*

This breakout session will allow for a in-depth discussion about the myriad of challenges faced in situations where the other side is a self-rep. The session will also focus on solutions and strategies to manage the self-rep and the litigation and keep it moving. A discussion about approaches and styles when your opponent is a Union Rep and not Union Counsel will also form part of the discussion. Fact patterns and small group discussions will keep all entertained and engaged.

6:30 pm – 6:45 pm **Buses Leave to Steele Wheels** – *Front of Hotel*

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm **Reception** – *Steele Wheels Motor Museum*

8:45 pm - 9:00 pm **Buses Leave Back to Hotel** - *Front of Steele Wheels*

Saturday, September 26, 2026

8:00 am – 8:50 am **Breakfast** – *Halifax ABC*

8:50 am – 9:50 am **Current and Emerging Issues in the Federal Sector – Nova Scotia ABCD**

Adopting the popular “quick hits” format, new to the 2026 Conference is a session focused on current and emerging developments in the Federal sector. The panel will discuss issues related to labour relations (including government intervention), permissible use of replacement workers, pay equity, workplace investigations and recent *Canada Labour Code* developments. While focused on the Federal sector, the panel will have broad appeal to employer counsel generally given the recent activity under the *Canada Labour Code*.

9:50 am – 10:35 am **Cross Canada Employment Law Update – Part 1 – Nova Scotia ABCD**

From emerging trends and headline grabbing cases to evolving rules around termination, accommodation, remote work, and beyond, we’ll break down what’s new, what’s changing, and what might just keep you up at night. Expect practical insights, lively debate, and maybe even a little intra provincial rivalry—because what’s a Canadian legal panel without a few polite disagreements?

10:35 am – 10:55 am **Break – Nova Scotia Foyer**

10:55 am – 11:40 am **Cross Canada Employment Law Update – Part 2 – Nova Scotia ABCD**

11:40 am – 12:40 pm **From the Bench: The Dos, Don’ts, and Deal-Breakers of Courtroom Advocacy – Nova Scotia ABCD**

Hear directly from Justice McCreary from the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal and Justice Norton from the Nova Scotia Supreme Court as they provide key tips on what works and what does not work when you are in their courtroom. This priceless advice will be applicable to all forms of advocacy before arbitrators, board and commissions.

12:40 pm **Closing Remarks – Nova Scotia ABCD**