



Information compliments of the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre 1-800-668-1010

Ask an Information Officer

I am looking to hire a part-time employee to help out at my store during the busy time of September to December. What is the minimum I have to pay them? Are they entitled to holiday and vacation pay?

Jaime Wombolt

In Nova Scotia, rules pertaining to minimum wage and other working conditions are set out in the *Labour Standards Code*. This Act is administered by the Labour Standards Division of the Department of Environment and Labour. In addition to fair wages, the division deals with issues such as hours of work, employment records, termination, and others.

Currently in Nova Scotia, there are two levels of minimum wage. Inexperienced workers are entitled to receive a minimum of \$6.70, while workers with some experience (more than three calendar months in the same line of work) must be paid at least \$7.15. Of course, you can pay your employees as much as you like above and beyond these rates. Keep in mind that these rates may change regularly, so be sure to check with the Labour Standards Division for increases in the minimum wage. Also covered by the General Minimum Wage Order are issues such as overtime, partial hours, being called into work, the cost of uniforms, and others of which you should be aware.

Every employee, no matter the number of hours he or she works in a week, is entitled to receive vacation pay or paid vacation. Employ-

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Business Article

Preparing your retail business for the golden quarter

Shirley Steller

It seems early to be thinking about it, but it is time for retail businesses to prepare for the coming holiday season. The last quarter of the year has been coined the 'golden quarter' by some to reflect the dramatic increase in sales experienced by most Canadian retail businesses during this period.

Here are a few suggestions on how to prepare your business:

Check sales records from previous years: Check on your own sales trends to see what moves quickly and what you often mark down after the holiday season. Be sure to order your stock accordingly.

Scan industry magazines and general media resources: Find out whether your usual big sellers are still in demand and what this year's hot ticket items will be. If they are products your store typically carries, be sure to order in advance so you are not short-stocked later.

Front load seasonal staff: Many businesses hire the first of their holiday season staff in the early Fall to manage their training load and to accommodate increasing sales leading up to the end of the quarter. Bring new staff on one at a time or in phases, giving new employees the opportunity to climb their learning curves before the next wave of staff is hired.

Stock up on basic necessities: Be sure you have a good supply of bags, register tape, elastics, box openers, extra pens and other basics required to keep your operation running

smoothly. Don't forget to stock up on gift wrap, tape and ribbons if you are planning to offer that service in the months to come.

Check out your stock space: You will likely be receiving a great deal of merchandise for the next few weeks, so be sure your stock room is organized and that you have the space to store things before they arrive. Plan to store similar items together so they are easy to find when you need them.

Think about safety: With all that extra merchandise on-hand, you will need to have sturdy ladders for staff to climb when they are restocking shelves. Also, be sure that your shelves can withstand the weight of any incoming stock—the last thing you need is a shelf collapsing in the middle of a busy period. Finally,

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keep supplies on hand to ensure your stockroom stays clean and organized: puddles of water from melting snow can send a valuable employee home for days to recover from a workplace injury.

Learn about local promotional opportunities: Find out whether the businesses around you will be promoting their wares together and be sure to take part in what you can. Depending on your business, individual promotional activities such as discounts, flyers, radio advertising and midnight madness can also contribute to your sales.

Give back: In the spirit of the season, why not offer a way for your customers to give to charity? It could be as simple as donating spare change, or a more creative offering, such as the opportunity to purchase teddy bears for children in need.

Lastly, while you're planning all of this, take some time out for yourself. As the gift buying season ramps up, it will get more and more difficult for you to take downtime. If you will be part of your business' front line operations, be sure to rest up and avoid planning major activities until the middle or end of January.

Featured Website

Retail Council of Canada (RCC)

Julie Penwarden

Known as "the voice of retail" in Canada, the Retail Council of Canada (RCC) is a non-profit organization representing over 40,000 organizations of varied retail formats. The RCC protects the interests of retailers by providing advocacy, research, education, and services that enhance opportunities for success.

The RCC is comprised of several committees that work in the interest of retail trade – each with a specific function. The committees advise or assist RCC staff and volunteers with issues relating to their respective roles:

- Certification and training
- Taxation
- Human resources
- Scanner accuracy
- Loss prevention
- Environment
- Privacy
- International Trade

If you are a retailer or provide products and/or services to retailers, you are eligible to become a member of the Retail Council of Canada and receive the following benefits:

- lower credit and debit processing rates
- gas and car maintenance savings
- discount health plans for you and your staff
- exclusive phone and internet offers
- savings on sign printing
- access to industry research
- discounts on world-class events

If you are still not sure if you would benefit by becoming a member, calculate the savings you can enjoy from customer transactions with RCC's Merchant Calculator. The cost of your

membership depends on the annual gross sales volume of your business.

The RCC represents an industry that touches the lives of Canadians in every part of the country. For more information about the role of the Retail Council of Canada or how this organization can benefit your business, visit RCC's web site or view the list of contacts.

From Information to Business is a monthly publication of the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre.

Our Mission

To improve the start-up, survival and growth rates of small- and medium-sized enterprises by giving business people in every part of Nova Scotia access to accurate, timely and relevant information and referrals

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ees are entitled to two weeks of paid vacation after 12 months of work, and three weeks after 8 or more years of employment. The legal rate for vacation pay is 4% of gross wages, and this can either be distributed on each cheque, or as a lump sum at a time agreed upon by the employer and employee, in advance of the employee's planned vacation. In the case of part-time employees, vacation pay is generally included in the hourly rate, but if your employee is temporary, it may be easier to pay it out at the end of his or her employment.

For more details on these Labour Standards issues and any other you may be concerned about, or if there is something that you are not sure about, please contact the Labour Standards Division. And always remember to provide pay stubs to your employees, and to keep careful employee records to clearly demonstrate that your employees have received all of their entitlements under the *Labour Standards Code*.

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Don't miss out on new programs and services geared to supporting your business. Subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter today at <http://www.cbsc.org/ns/newsletter.cfm>.

Hot Picks

The following books are available from the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre Library. These books may also be available in our resource centres, located throughout the province.

Marchandisage (French Only) *Camille Roberge*

On explique comment bâtir des étalages qui permettent de maximiser les ventes et comment procéder à des aménagements conséquents. Vous découvrirez toute l'importance des vitrines dans un monde où les clients sont de plus en plus pressés.

The Structure of Retail in Canada *Jacobson Consulting Inc.*

This detailed report prepared for the Retail Council of Canada provides you with analyses on many aspects relating to the Canadian retail sector. The information in the report would be valuable to anyone considering entering or currently in the retail industry.

Reading this report will increase your awareness of current retail conditions and trends. The information is substantiated by data in over one hundred and fifty charts, graphs and tables that are presented in an easy-to-read, clear fashion.

The Structure of Retail in Canada is available online in pdf format:
http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/inretra-comde.nsf/en/h_qn00278e.html

The Guide to Retail Business Planning *Warren G. Purdy*

The Guide to Retail Business Planning is an essential resource for anyone considering entering the retail industry whether you are planning to start a business from scratch, enter a franchise agreement, or buy an existing store.

This handbook is designed to integrate all the information you will need to help you write a business plan that will give you the best chance to be successful

in your venture as well as suit your personal and professional style. If you are planning on entering the retail industry, this resource will provide you with information that will help you maximize the effectiveness of your business plan.

Directory of Retail Chains in Canada 2006

Monday Report on Retail

This directory provides you with key information about retail chains in Canada. You will find the following chain details in the listings:

- Chain Name
- Total Locations in Canada
- Retail Category
- Year Established
- Ownership
- Price Category
- Private Labels
- Total Sq. Ft
- Avg. Sales/Sq. Ft/Year (indicates average sales per square foot per year)
- Initial and Total Investment of a Franchise

The directory provides important and relevant information for all retail chains across Canada, and can be used as a research tool or as a quick-reference for anyone. This listing provides convenience and thorough results in either case.

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