

Unionized employee: what is the deadline for a grievance or complaint?

Labour law complaint deadlines in Quebec: the complete guide, or almost... Part 3 of 5

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Published October 17, 2026

Unionized? Your union generally files the grievance for you, but some deadlines are yours. Here are the deadlines for grievances, complaints against your union and complaints to the CNESST.

Before counting your days, read our main article: [Dismissal, harassment, unpaid wages, workplace injury: which deadline for which recourse?](#)

This article is part of a 5-article series:

1. The essentials: understanding and calculating your deadlines
2. Non-unionized or municipal employees in Quebec
3. **Unionized employees** (you are here)
4. Workplace injury and occupational health and safety
5. Federal jurisdiction, employment insurance and bankruptcy

You are unionized

If you are covered by a collective agreement, it is generally your union that files the grievance for you. Contact your union as soon as the event occurs.

Table: Unionized employees

Your situation	Deadline	Where to file
Grievance on the interpretation or application of the collective agreement (dismissal, disciplinary measure, wages, seniority, etc.)	As set out in your collective agreement	Your union. The deadline generally ranges from 15 to 90 days depending on the agreement. Check yours right away. If the agreement says nothing, the <i>Labour Code</i> provides a default deadline of 6 months
Grievance for psychological or sexual harassment	2 years	Your union, from the last act, even if your collective agreement does not provide for this deadline or provides a shorter one

Your situation	Deadline	Where to file
Grievance for discrimination (age, sex, pregnancy, disability, origin, etc.)	2 years (1 year if your employer is federally regulated)	Your union, from the last event. This deadline cannot be shorter than the deadline for a complaint to the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, even if your collective agreement provides less
Dismissal, suspension or reprisals for a reason prohibited by (sick leave, pregnancy, complaint, claim, etc.: see our article "Non-unionized or municipal employees in Quebec")	45 calendar days	Complaint to the CNESST, from the measure. This remedy is also open to unionized employees, in addition to the grievance: file it within the deadline without waiting for the outcome of the grievance. How the two remedies interact depends on the circumstances: consult us (90 days if the measure is related to your age or years of service)
Complaint against your union: it refuses to defend you or acts in bad faith, arbitrarily, in a discriminatory manner or with serious negligence	6 months	Complaint directly to the Administrative Labour Tribunal (TAT), not to the CNESST, from the moment you learn of your union's failure
Grievance related to the French language (penalty, reprisals, harassment or discrimination because of language)	As set out in your collective agreement (if the acts also constitute psychological harassment, the 2-year deadline may apply: check right away)	Your union. If your union does not refer the grievance to arbitration, you may do so yourself

- **Measure taken against you because of union activities:** complaint to the TAT within 30 days of the measure.
Note: filing a grievance against the same measure does not suspend this deadline.

New for grievances filed on or after October 28, 2026*: filing the grievance is no longer enough. If no arbitrator has been appointed within 6 months of the filing of the grievance, the party that filed it must, within the following 10 days, ask the Minister of Labour to appoint one, failing which it is presumed to have discontinued the grievance. The Administrative Labour Tribunal may extend this deadline or relieve the party of its default for a reasonable cause. In addition, the hearing of the grievance must begin no later than one year after it is filed, unless the arbitrator decides otherwise. Check with your union that your grievance has actually been referred to arbitration and that a request for the appointment of an arbitrator is made in time.

** These two new rules do not apply to the public and parapublic sectors (Code, as amended by to improve certain labour laws, S.Q. 2025, c. 28).*

Good to know: a grievance submitted to the employer within 15 days of the event cannot be dismissed by the arbitrator solely because the deadline in the collective agreement was not met. Since October 28, 2025, the parties must also consider mediation before arbitration.

Our tips to avoid losing your rights

- Deadlines are generally counted in calendar days, weekends and statutory holidays included, and a deadline that ends on a Saturday is not always extended: aim for the Friday.
- Write down the exact date of each event: dismissal, last act of harassment, receipt of a decision.
- Do not wait for negotiations with the employer to end: file your complaint, as it does not prevent a settlement.
- If in doubt about the deadline, go with the shortest one.

Conclusion

Deadlines in labour law are short and vary depending on your employer, your status and the type of problem. A mistake of a few days can cost you a remedy. Please remember that this is not legal advice and that every case must be assessed individually.

Important notice: this article is provided for general information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Laws change and every situation is different: it is important to consult a lawyer before making a decision or letting a deadline pass. Online tools and artificial intelligence can also be wrong; do not rely solely on an answer obtained on the Internet or from a chatbot.

We strongly encourage you to contact us without delay, so that the applicable deadlines are met and your claims are not dismissed.