

# British Columbia

## LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### New Laws

Oct 1: With the U.S. trade war heating up, British Columbia paused its planned expansion of the Provincial Sales Tax (PST) to professional services. The measure will save affected businesses, local governments, and residents in the province an expected \$260 million in 2026-27.

**Action Point:** Find out about [the 8 things HR directors can do to help their companies survive the impact of tariffs](#).

### Employment Benefits

Sep 18: The BC Superintendent of Pensions issued a new [Regulatory Statement](#) outlining its interpretation of regulations regarding the funding obligations of participating employers and reporting obligations of administrators when a defined benefit pension plan terminates while running a solvency deficit.

**Action Point:** Find out about the [perils of poor pension plan governance and how to avoid them](#).

### Employment Benefits

Oct 16: The BC Financial Services Authority ended public consultations on proposed updates to pension fees. The agency initiated the engagement in response to a recent review finding that while pension fee revenues have remained relatively unchanged since 2020, the costs of oversight required to regulate pension plans have increased over time. BCFSA is proposing changes that maintain the existing member-based fee model while updating fee amounts and thresholds to better support sustainable cost recovery and a fair allocation of regulatory costs across pension plans.

### New Laws

Sep 18: British Columbia announced new measures to support businesses impacted by the Trump tariffs: i. Addition of \$30 million to the BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund to help businesses invest in new equipment, technology, and infrastructure; ii. Addition of \$30 million to the Integrated Marketplace initiative to technology companies commercialize and bring new technologies to market; and iii \$15 million to expand the BuyBC program beyond agriculture.

### New Laws

Sep 11: British Columbia is providing up to \$5 million in Next Generation 911 (NG911) funding to help municipalities in the province transition from local 10-digit emergency numbers to standard three-digit 911 calling. Funding will cover one-time technical, contractual and coordination work needed to enable the transition.

### New Laws

Oct 19: BC drivers with Class 7 novice or Class 7, 8 novice licences and clean driving records no longer have to take second road tests to get Class 5 licences with restrictions. Instead, they'll undergo a Driving Record Assessment demonstrating safe driving and eligibility to upgrade from novice status. Unsafe behaviours like convictions for speeding and electronic device use, will result in re-starting the "novice" period. Drivers who pass the assessment will be eligible to move to a Class 5 licence after a 12-month restricted period.

### **New Laws**

Sep 22: BC reports that its new mineral exploration permits system is working. Since the fixed permitting timelines framework took effect in April 2026, every permitting target timeline has been met, with the first permits issued ahead of schedule. Since the Mineral Claims Consultation Framework (MCCF) was introduced in March 2025, approximately 80% of all applications received have been processed, while median approval time has decreased by approximately 8%.

### **New Laws**

Sep 21: BC is investing nearly \$27 million in 17 industrial decarbonization projects. The Clean Industry Fund money will help industrial operators reduce emissions, improve efficiency and strengthen competitiveness. The projects are located throughout the province, including Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, the Interior, the Kootenays, and northeastern BC.

### **Discrimination**

Sep 15: The recent wildfire evacuation orders, hazy skies, and heat warnings had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups like seniors, children, pregnant people, Indigenous people and people with disabilities, particularly in rural and poor communities. That's the finding of a new BC Human Rights Commissioner [report](#).

**Action Point:** Find out how to create and implement a legally sound [Non-Discrimination Policy](#) at your workplace.

### **Workplace Harassment**

Sep 15: Due to the upcoming provincial elections, WorkSafeBC temporarily suspended public consultations on new Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) psychological safety rules until further notice. The [proposed](#) Regulations require employers to implement workplace harassment and violence programs that include written policies and procedures for dealing with harassment and violence, training workers on the risks, recording incidents, and implementing or modifying control measures to eliminate or minimize risk of recurrence.

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement a legally sound and effective [Workplace Harassment Prevention Game Plan](#) to ensure compliance with the new BC OHS requirements if and when they do take effect.

### **Workplace Violence**

Sep 18: Exactly a year ago, British Columbia received an independent report (the Stanton Report) listing 21 recommendations for improving the province's legal system to better support victims of intimate partner and sexual violence. The Attorney General now reports that progress has been made in implementing 19 of

those recommendations. The government plans to introduce new legislation to establish a mechanism to coordinate justice system reforms and improve safety for victims and survivors.

**Action Point:** Are you doing enough to protect your employees against violence at work? Find out about the 10 things you must do to [prevent workplace violence](#).

### Health & Safety

Oct 9: WorkSafeBC confirmed that the [new OHS requirements](#) for use of tight-fitting respirators, which will officially take effect on November 6. The new rules eliminate the term “clean shaven” and replace it with language requiring employers to ensure that nothing is allowed to intrude between the skin of a worker’s face or neck and the respirator seal, or otherwise interfere with the proper functioning of the respirator.

**Action Point:** Find out about [OHS employer PPE and safety equipment payment requirements](#) across Canada.

### Health & Safety

Sep 15: WorkSafeBC paused consultations on [proposed](#) personal protective equipment (PPE) OHS [amendments](#) due to the provincial elections. The rules require employers to ensure that PPE properly fits and is as comfortable as practicable based on the worker’s characteristics and workplace conditions. In selecting required PPE, employers must consult with the joint health and safety committee or safety representative, as well as a “representative sample of the workers” required to use the PPE.

### Drugs & Alcohol

Oct 14: The BC Coroners Service reported that there were 113 suspected toxic drug deaths in the province in July and 126 deaths in August. Through the first eight months of 2026, 76% of reported unregulated drug death victims were male. Persons between the ages of 30 and 59 have accounted for 69% of drug toxicity deaths in the province during the year. Fluorofentanyl is the most common substance detected in testing, discovered in 68% of unregulated drug deaths, followed by cocaine at 56%.

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement a [naloxone opioid drug overdose plan](#) that can help you prevent overdose deaths at your workplace.

## CASES

### Workplace Violence: BC Sues OpenAI for Failing to Prevent Tumbler Ridge Massacre

The Government of British Columbia filed a lawsuit against OpenAI for its alleged role in failing to prevent last February’s Tumbler Ridge mass shooting tragedy. The lawsuit claims that OpenAI’s internal safety team flagged the shooter’s violent ChatGPT chats in June 2025 and suggested calling the police but that company leaders rejected the idea choosing only to deactivate the shooter’s account. Although OpenAI’s CEO later issued an open letter of apology promising safety changes, the province claims that the company hasn’t followed through. In addition

to money damages to support the victims and build a new school, BC is seeking court orders that would force OpenAI to change the way it handles violent threats on ChatGPT [*British Columbia v OpenAI*, [Govt. Press Release](#), September 21, 2026].

**Action Point:** The takeaway from the *OpenAI* case is that companies may have a legal duty to protect third parties that they know face an imminent risk of violence. That includes not only AI providers and social media platforms but also employers. Find out how to implement a legally sound and effective [Workplace Violence Prevention Game Plan](#) at your site.

### **Employment Contract: Termination Notice Limit Is Unenforceable If Employee Gets Nothing in Return**

A Moulder Technician relocated from Calgary to Chilliwack to take a new job with a forestry products company in 2021. Three years and one wage increase later, he signed a new contract with the firm which, unlike the original, included a clause purporting to limit his notice for termination without cause to the minimum required by employment standards laws. When the company did fire him without cause, the Technician claimed the clause was unenforceable. The BC court agreed citing venerable legal principles holding that contractual agreements are enforceable only when the other party gets “consideration,” that is, something valuable in return. The Technician didn’t receive consideration for accepting the termination notice limit. Employment wasn’t consideration, the court explained, because the Technician was already employed by the firm when he signed the new contract [*Chowanetz v Ivor Forest Products Ltd.*, 2026 BCSC 1760 (CanLII), September 17, 2026].

**Action Point:** The takeaway from *Chowanetz* is that employee givebacks aren’t legally valid unless there’s due consideration and that employment for an already employed person isn’t such consideration. Find out [how to avoid contractual pitfalls when restructuring the terms of employees’ employment](#).