

British Columbia

LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leaves of Absence

Aug 6: Newly effective *Employment Standards Act* (ESA) [regulations](#) amendments allow employees to take up to 24 months of combined reservist leave in a 60-month period for military skills training, deployment for Canadian Armed Forces operations, and pre- or post-deployment activities. Under previous rules, reservist leave for training was limited to 20 days per year.

Action Point: Use the HR Insider [template](#) to create a legally sound military reservist leave policy for your company.

New Laws

Sep 8: British Columbia businesses facing tariff-induced liquidity problems can now [apply](#) to Pacific Economic Development Canada (PacifiCan) for non-repayable Regional Tariff Response Initiative (RTRI) support of up to \$3 million, including up to \$2 million for liquidity support and up to \$1 million for pivot projects. Repayable support over \$1 million is also available for businesses undertaking larger transformation projects.

Action Point: Find out about the [8 ways the U.S. tariffs affect](#) Canadian workplaces and HR activities.

New Laws

Sep 4: PacifiCan announced an investment of over \$11 million for 10 businesses and organizations across Northern B.C. in key industries affected by global trade disruptions, including advanced manufacturing and forestry. The money will help communities in the region navigate current trade challenges, build skills, and achieve long-term growth.

New Laws

Aug 20: The federal and provincial governments are jointly investing \$106.5 million to create a new wild Pacific salmon conservation and recovery program. Over the next seven years, the British Columbia Fisheries Fund (BCFF) will support 170 projects dedicated to salmon infrastructure, innovation, scientific research, and marketing with Ottawa to provide 60% and BC 40% of the funding.

New Laws

Aug 26: Transport Canada's Airports Capital Assistance Program announced an investment of over \$23.5 million to support critical infrastructure and safety improvements at six local airports across British Columbia, including Prince Rupert, Fort Nelson, Kamloops, Smithers, Masset, and Bella Coola.

New Laws

Sep 2: Northern BC businesses may now apply to the new Business Diversification

and Sustainability (BDS) program for grants of up to \$200,000, covering as much as 75% of project costs to purchase equipment, adopt new technology, expand markets, introduce new products or services, or increase productivity. Deadline to [apply](#): October 15, 2026.

New Laws

Sep 1: Effective October 19, 2026, BC drivers with a Class 7 novice or Class 7, 8 novice licence and a clean driving record won't take a second road test to get a Class 5 licence with restrictions. Instead, they'll undergo a Driving Record Assessment demonstrating safe driving and, thus, eligibility to upgrade their licence 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

Aug 27: British Columbia is revising its forest management system. The proposed Working Forest Landscape Model consists of three management zones supporting a coordinated approach to land use and stewardship: a Working-Forest Zone prioritizing production of timber for commercial harvesting; a Multiple-Use Zone focused on restoration and enhancement of ecosystem functions; and a Conservation and Protection Zone to ensure biodiversity through protected habitat and conservation networks.

New Laws

Oct 1: The British Columbia FireSmart Community Funding and Supports (FCFS) program opened its intake for 2027 offering local governments and First Nations across the province \$15 million to support community wildfire preparation, response, and resilience projects. Deadline to [apply](#): December 31.

Discrimination

Sep 15: From now through October 19, organizations can [apply](#) for 2026-27 Inclusive Communities Grants Program grants of up to \$5,000 per project. Grants are available to non-profits based in British Columbia for projects designed to foster inclusion, reduce racism, and strengthen multicultural understanding.

Action Point: Beware of seemingly legitimate [employment practices](#) that may have the effect of inadvertently perpetuating racial discrimination and increasing your liability risks.

Privacy

Aug 31: The BC Office of Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) published new [guidance](#) to help public bodies, organizations, and individuals identify and guard against identity theft and manage risk of liability under applicable privacy laws.

Action Point: Find out [how to avoid SIN collection and other risky practices that expose your employees to risk of identity theft and fraud](#).

Workplace Harassment

Oct 9: WorkSafeBC will close public consultations on [proposed](#) new OHS (Part 4.1)

Regulations requiring 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.

Health & Safety

Sep 1: From now through October 26, WorkSafeBC will be taking [comments](#) on proposed OHS [amendments](#) requiring personal protective equipment (PPE) to properly fit and be 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" who'll be required to use the PPE.

Health & Safety

Nov 6: Revised [OHS requirements](#) for use of tight-fitting respirators officially take effect. 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.

Drugs & Alcohol

Aug 25: According to preliminary data from the BC Coroners Service, 138 people in the province died due to suspected use of toxic drugs in June, approximately 4.6 deaths per day. Through the first six months of 2026, 81% of unregulated drug deaths occurred inside in places such as private residences (53%) and other residences such as social and supportive housing, SROs, shelters, and other locations (28%), and 18% occurred in outdoor places such as vehicles, sidewalks, streets, and parks.

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 Harassment: WestJet Shells Out \$4.5 Million to Settle Flight Attendants' Class Action

A British Columbia court has approved a \$4.5 million settlement of a workplace harassment class action lawsuit against WestJet filed by approximately 3,400 current and former flight attendants. In addition to being a class action, the case is noteworthy because the claims were based not on OHS or tort law but breach of the airline's contractual duty to ensure flight attendants a harassment-free workplace. WestJet talked a good game about preventing harassment but didn't make the necessary efforts to deliver on those promises, the plaintiffs claim. As part of the

settlement, WestJet will have to hire an independent third party to evaluate workplace harassment prevalence, underreporting, and the effectiveness of its current reporting channels [[Lewis v WestJet Airlines Ltd.](#), 2026 BCSC 1547 (CanLII), August 10, 2026].

Action Point: Don't assume workers will tell you if they're being harassed, bullied, or threatened at work. Many victims are too afraid to come forward, especially if they don't think you'll take their complaint seriously. That's why you should [use pulse surveys to smoke out signs of a toxic workplace](#).

Termination: Employer Can't Prove that Fired Nurse Committed Harassment

After suspending her twice, a long-term care facility terminated a nurse for allegedly harassing colleagues, creating a stressful work environment, and similar conduct-related offences. But the British Columbia arbitrator said there wasn't enough evidence to support the charges. The evidence suggested that the nurse did her job well and was "very nice to the residents." There were no written harassment complaints against her—while some coworkers found her difficult to work with, they stopped short of accusing her of harassment or abuse. Not having a written harassment policy did little to help the employer's case. As for remedy, since the nurse didn't want to be reinstated, the arbitrator ordered a hearing to determine how much money the facility would have to pay her in damages [[Select Senior Services Ltd. \(Lakeshore Care Centre\) v Hospital Employees' Union](#), 2026 CanLII 92311 (BC LA), August 28, 2026].

Action Point: *Select Senior Services* is an important reminder of the importance of implementing a [Harassment Prevention and Compliance Game Plan](#) at your workplace that provides for investigating complaints and objectively and reasonably assessing the findings in deciding on discipline.