

British Columbia

LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Minimum Wage

Feb 14: To keep up with inflation, BC announced that it will raise its general minimum wage from \$17.40 to \$17.85 per hour, effective June 1, 2025. The same 2.6% increase will apply to the minimum wage rates for residential caretakers, live-in home-support workers, camp leaders, and app-based ride-hailing and delivery services workers.

Discrimination

Feb 19: BC's new Provincial Committee on Anti-Racism held its first meeting in Vancouver. Its mission? Removing systemic barriers, making it difficult for racialized peoples to access government programs and services in the province. One of its first tasks will be to help develop anti-racism training standards for public bodies.

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

New Laws

Feb 24: BC will invest over \$15 million to support 19 new projects to help companies scale up their technology, upskill, provide training, and create made-in-BC solutions for the province's agriculture industry.

New Laws

Feb 19: After 4 years of labour shortages, growing competition, and production losses, and facing the threat of new U.S. tariffs, BC fruit tree farmers are getting much needed reinforcement in the form of a \$10 million one-time payment from the provincial government to the BC Fruit Growers' Association.

Health & Safety

Feb 3: [Amendments](#) to *OHS Regulations* on responding to hazardous substances emergencies took effect. Highlights: i. employers must consult workers in emergency planning; ii. clarification of information to include in workplace hazardous substances inventory; iii. hazard assessment must address all substances listed in inventory or that could foreseeably enter the workplace in an outside emergency; and iv. training and drills on the hazardous substances inventory and hazard assessment must be part of larger emergency response plan.

Drugs & Alcohol

Feb 4: The BC Coroner reported that there were 2,253 drug deaths in the province in 2024, a 13% decline from 2023 and the lowest annual total in 3 years. The rate of death in 2024 was 40 per 100,000 people, compared with 47 per 100,000 in 2023, 45 per 100,000 in 2022, and 44 per 100,000 in 2021.

Action Point: Find out how to implement a life-saving [naloxone opioid overdose](#)

[plan](#) to prevent overdose deaths at your workplace.

CASES

Theft: Not Returning Customer's Jacket Is Just Cause to Terminate

An airport employee got fired for taking home a jacket that a passenger left behind in the food court. I was going to turn the jacket into the lost-and-found, protested the employee, but I just found out that my niece in the Philippines had died and completely forgot. But the BC arbitrator didn't buy it and tossed the union's grievance, noting that the employee held onto the jacket for 11 days without saying anything to anyone. It was also suspicious that she stuffed the jacket into her backpack and walked right past lost-and-found on the day she found it [[Service Employees International Union, Local 2 Brewery, General & Professional Workers Union v Bee-clean Building Maintenance](#), 2025 CanLII 5357 (BC LA), January 8, 2025].

Action Point: One big reason the employer in this case prevailed was that it had a clearly written policy banning theft. Find out how to implement a [legally sound anti-theft policy](#) at your own workplace.

COVID: Mandatory Vaccination Policy Becomes Unreasonable to Enforce

While arbitrators have largely upheld mandatory workplace vaccination policies during the COVID pandemic, a BC case bucking the trend began when Purolator implemented a Safe Work Policy requiring all employees and owners/managers to either be vaccinated or test negative at least twice a week under rapid testing carried out at work facilities. The Teamsters filed hundreds of grievances challenging the SWP. After Local 31 won its arbitration in Ontario, arbitrators in other provinces followed suit in finding the SWP was reasonable when it was first adopted became unreasonable to enforce as the COVID threat receded and ordering Purolator to pay compensation to workers who were placed on unpaid leave and owners/managers whose contracts were suspended as a result of the policy. The personal autonomy and bodily integrity of these people outweighed Purolator's safety interests, the arbitrator reasoned, especially since the company wasn't a hospital or other health-sensitive workplace. The BC court found the arbitration ruling reasonable and rejected Purolator's appeal [[Purolator Canada Inc. v Canada Council of Teamsters](#), 2025 BCSC 148 (CanLII), January 30, 2025].

Action Point: While arbitrators have largely upheld mandatory workplace vaccination policies during the COVID pandemic, the Purolator case bucks the trend because the policy was intrusive, and the company insisted on enforcing it even when the COVID threat was receding. So, be sure that your own [mandatory vaccination policy is reasonable and nondiscriminatory](#).

Health & Safety: Province Fines Itself Nearly \$800K for Hi-Risk OHS Violations

WorkSafeBC rocked the provincial government with \$783,068 worth of administrative monetary penalties for having untrained personnel take over traffic control duties from properly trained traffic control persons at a music festival. The untrained government TCPs were also not given specific directions, competent supervision, or appropriate devices while carrying out their duties from an unsafe position on the highway. This is the biggest OHS fine reported in Canada in 2025 and would have been the second highest for all of 2024 [*Provincial Government*].