

# British Columbia

## LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### New Laws

Mar 13: The BC Assembly tabled legislation ([Bill 7](#)) giving the cabinet new tools to fight back against U.S. tariffs, including authority to remove or revise barriers impeding interprovincial trade, impose tolls/fees on non-Canadian commercial vehicles using provincial public infrastructure such as highways, and direct public-sector bodies to exclude U.S. suppliers when procuring goods and services.

### New Laws

Mar 11: To attract U.S. doctors and nurses, BC fast-tracked credential recognition and launched a recruitment campaign. The province is also working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons on a process enabling U.S.-trained doctors with certification from the American Board of Medical Specialties to become fully licensed in B.C. without need for further assessment, examination, or training.

### New Laws

Mar 19: The federal Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources announced that it's investing over \$20 million to support BC's crucial forestry sector. The money will go to 67 projects across the province designed to boost the industry's competitiveness and resiliency.

### New Laws

Mar 6: BC and the federal government signed a new agreement that will provide Pharmacare more than \$670 million over 4 years to provide universal access to contraceptive and diabetes medications, devices and supplies for BC residents at little to no cost, starting in March 2026. As part of the agreement, BC will also provide free public coverage of hormone replacement therapy to treat menopausal symptoms for all residents.

### Employment Benefits

Feb 26: BC announced that the Bridging to Retirement Program, which has played a critical role in helping forestry workers and contractors transition to retirement, is now fully subscribed and will no longer accept applications. Since its creation in 2019, the Program has provided more than \$92 million in funding to nearly 2,220 forestry workers in BC.

### Drugs & Alcohol

Mar 6: After 28 years of litigation, the provinces and territories reached a landmark \$32.5 billion settlement agreement with multinational tobacco companies under which BC will receive approximately \$3.7 billion over approximately 18 years to invest in cancer treatment and primary care, expand research into treatments and promote smoking cessation.

**Action Point:** Find out how to comply with [workplace smoking laws](#).

## Drugs & Alcohol

Mar 14: Unregulated drug overdoses and toxicity claimed the lives of 152 residents in the province in January, the BC Coroner reported. Deaths among those between the age of 40 and 59 accounted for 50% of drug-toxicity deaths in the province, while 3 deaths were reported among children and youth under age 18.

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement a life-saving [naloxone opioid overdose plan](#) to prevent overdose deaths at your workplace.

## CASES

### Employment Contract: Duty of Honest Performance Doesn't Apply to Contract Negotiations

Employers in BC dodged a major bullet with the province's top court ruling that the duty of honest performance in fulfilling employment contract duties doesn't extend to pre-contractual negotiations. The case began when a group of ex-employees brought a class action lawsuit against a Vancouver hotel for allegedly withholding crucial information about their healthcare coverage during the height of the COVID crisis to persuade them to give up their status as regular employees and accept casual employment instead. The lower court ruled that the employees had a valid claim for breach of the duty of honest performance and let the case go forward as a class action. But the BC Court of Appeal reversed, finding that the duty applies only to the performance of contractual duties, not how they're negotiated. But while the ruling is good news for employers in general, it wasn't a total victory for the hotel. That's because the Court allowed the employees to amend their complaint to allege that the hotel's alleged misrepresentations violated its duty to honestly perform its duties under the regular employment agreements that were in effect when the negotiations over casual employment took place [[Ocean Pacific Hotels Ltd. v. Lee](#), 2025 BCCA 57 (CanLII), February 28, 2025].

**Action Point:** This case is just the most recent example of attempts by employees to expand the basic duty of employers to show honesty and in good faith in carrying out contracts to hold their employers liable. [Find out more about this trend](#) and the potential liability threat it poses to employers.

### Termination: Sleeping on the Job Is Just Cause to Fire Maintenance Employee

A tennis club fired a maintenance employee for allegedly sleeping in the laundry room during his shift and then lying about it during the investigation. The union claimed that the employee should have gotten only a written warning given his 8 years of outstanding service and strong relations with club members. The BC arbitrator ruled that termination wasn't excessive and that the club was justified in concluding that an employee who sleeps on the job and shows dishonesty during the investigation could no longer be trusted [[Jericho Tennis Club v Unite Here, Local 40](#), 2025 CanLII 17236 (BC LA), March 3, 2025].

**Action Point:** Get help in [determining whether sleeping on the job](#) is just cause to terminate.

### Health & Safety: \$783K Storage Racks OHS Fine Bill Is No Bargain for Walmart

For the second month in a row, WorkSafeBC handed out the nation's highest OHS fine in 2025--\$783,068 against Walmart after inspectors observed multiple OHS

deficiencies with warehouse storage racks in use at 2 of its stores, including failure to ensure the rated capacity of storage racks was clearly posted, material was placed on storage racks in stable and secure manner and was stabilized or retrained as necessary. The store also failed to have a qualified person inspect the storage racks for damage at intervals and have written instructions available to workers as part of its OHS program [*Walmart Canada Corp.*].

### **Workplace Violence: No Just Cause to Fire Mechanic for Bullying**

A heavy-duty mechanic employed as a Real Seal Journeyman who liked to sit in the same lunchroom seat was perturbed to find a coworker had taken the seat even though he left his lunch bag on the chair to “reserve” the spot. The mechanic asked the co-worker to move but he refused while denying that he had moved the lunch bag. “I’ve been sitting in that same seat for 2 years,” the mechanic insisted; the coworker refuted the claim by noting that the mechanic had gotten fired before being reinstated as a result of arbitration 6 months later. The tension and stalemate continued until the coworker left the lunchroom and reported the incident to the manager. The company concluded that the mechanic had bullied the coworker and terminated his employment. The union insisted that the mechanic didn’t do anything to warrant termination, and the Alberta arbitrator agreed. All the mechanic did was ask a coworker to move his seat and there was “no evidence” that he did so “in an aggressive or threatening manner” [[\*Harbour International Trucks Ltd. v International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 115\*](#), 2025 CanLII 21142 (BC LA), March 5, 2025].

**Action Point:** Find out about the [5 liability risks posed by workplace bullying](#) and what you can do to manage each one.