

# British Columbia

## LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Leaves of Absence

Oct 30: [Bill 30](#) providing up to 27 weeks' unpaid leave for employees who can't work for at least a one-week period due to serious illness or injury passed Second Reading. Leave must be taken during a 52-week period and employees must obtain a doctor or nurse practitioner certificate verifying medical need for leave and dates it's required.

**Action Point:** British Columbia is just one of the many provinces that have changed their sick and long-term illness leave laws since the pandemic. Find out how to implement a legally sound [Sick Leave Compliance Game Plan](#) at your own workplace along with a [summary of the sick leave rules](#) in each part of Canada.

### Absenteeism

Nov 12: Newly effective British Columbia employment standards regulations ban employers from asking for a sick note for a worker's first two health-related, short-term absences of five consecutive days or fewer in a calendar year. Doctor's notes are still in play to verify long-term medical absences.

**Action Point:** Find out about the [rules determining whether you can ask sick employees for a doctor's note](#) and what you can do to verify health-related absences.

### New Laws

Nov 17: Look West, British Columbia's newly launched 10-year strategic economic plan prioritizes expansion of skills training, generating growth in key sectors, achieving economic balance and speeding up the permitting process for major infrastructure, defence, and other development projects. Target sectors include marine, aerospace, construction, innovation, life sciences, AI and quantum computing, agriculture and food processing, trade and logistics infrastructure, and the critical minerals and energy the world needs.

### Training

Nov 14: British Columbia announced that it's establishing a \$241 million fund to finance the doubling of funding for skilled trades funding by 2029. The money will be used to increase per-seat funding for apprentice programs, reduce waiting lists for critical industrial trades, facilitate workers' movement between industries and advance skilled-trades certification, beginning with crane operators. BC has a record number of registered apprentices with nearly 50,000 registered apprenticeships and over 11,000 high school participants.

### Pay Equity

Oct 31: The BCFSA released its first [pay transparency report](#), as required by the new [Pay Transparency Act](#). Key findings: Last year, women and female-presenting people in British Columbia earned, on average, 15% less than men and male-presenting people. The pay gap is even more pronounced for women and gender-

diverse individuals who are Indigenous, racialized, newcomers, disabled, and/or 2SLGBTQIA+.

**Action Point:** Find out more about [pay equity laws](#) and their practical impact on operations.

### Privacy

Oct 30: Newly passed [Bill 17](#) increases the minimum penalties payable to victims of *Intimate Images Protection Act* violations from \$5,000 to as high as \$75,000 received Royal. Enacted 2 years ago, the Act enables people to apply online to the Civil Resolution Tribunal to get their intimate images off the internet, stop their distribution and seek monetary compensation from the person, social media company, or website that shared the image.

**Action Point:** Digital privacy is also a potential liability risk for employers. Find out how to protect your organization from [revenge porn and cyberbullying liability](#).

### Health & Safety

Oct 14: WorkSafeBC reported that the serious injury rate in manufacturing has been 44% higher than the average across all industries in the province over the past 5 years. During that time, over 26,000 manufacturing workers lost work time due to injury, including over 4,300 with serious injuries. The most common accidents were overexertion, being struck by or against objects, falls on the same level, and getting caught in machinery or equipment. Given the high risk of injury in manufacturing, WorkSafeBC conducted over 7,700 inspections in the sector last year.

### Workplace Violence

Oct 30: Royal Assent for [Bill 18](#) requiring post-secondary institutions to implement a sexual violence policy that, among other things, sets out procedures for making and responding to disclosures about a member of the institutional community, including imposition of discipline against those found to have engaged in wrongdoing. Post-secondary institutions would also have to make their sexual violence policy publicly available on their websites.

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement a legally sound and effective [Workplace Violence Prevention Game Plan](#) at a school or any other kind of site.

### Drugs & Alcohol

Nov 3: According to preliminary Coroners Service data, 158 people died of unregulated drug toxicity in British Columbia in September 2025. That's roughly 5.3 deaths per day. Two health authorities, Fraser and Vancouver Coastal health authorities have reported 56% of all toxic drug deaths in the province this year, with 406 and 366, respectively. The cities with the most deaths are Vancouver (314), Surrey (137) and Greater Victoria (93).

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement an effective [fitness for duty policy to control substance abuse](#) at your workplace.

## CASES

### **Workplace Harassment: OK to Find Employer Guilty of OHS Violation but Not Impose a Penalty**

A front desk clerk filed a workplace bullying, harassment and mobbing complaint with her employer, WorkSafeBC and the union, contending that she was the victim of false accusations by her colleagues. She then took a leave of medical absence due to anxiety from the matter. The union ended up settling the grievance without getting the acknowledgement and apology the clerk wanted. Adding insult to injury, the company wouldn't let her return to work. Meanwhile, WorkSafeBC determined that the company violated its duty to provide the clerk a safe workplace and protect her from mobbing but declined to issue a penalty. The clerk appealed to the British Columbia Court of Appeal, which found the decision not to penalize the company reasonable and refused to overturn it. It was open to the review officer to find that a violation occurred but that it didn't warrant a penalty because it wasn't intentional and didn't expose the clerk to real risk of harm, the high court reasoned [[Pereira v. British Columbia \(Workers' Compensation Board\)](#), 2025 BCCA 379 (CanLII), November 5, 2025].

**Action Point:** Find out how to implement a legally sound and effective [Workplace Harassment Prevention and Compliance Game Plan](#) at your workplace.

### **Health & Safety Provincial Government Fined \$759,368 for Wildfire Fighting Violations**

WorkSafeBC fined itself \$759,368 (the fourth highest OHS fine in Canada in 2025) for multiple OHS violations stemming from 2 wildfire fighting incidents. In the first incident, a worker and supervisor were in a utility terrain vehicle that went over a steep embankment. Neither occupant was wearing a helmet and the passenger wasn't wearing a seatbelt. Result: One fatality and citations for inadequate supervision, lack of safe work procedures and training for operating the UTV, and no pre-use inspection of the vehicle. In the second incident, a crew of 5 workers became entrapped during a planned ignition operation forcing other crews to navigate off-road when their escape route was compromised. WorkSafeBC cited the government employer for lack of planning, training, supervision, and communication [*Provincial Government*].