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British Columbia provincial legislation guide

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Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion

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Introduction

This guide provides a brief overview of key employment, health and safety, privacy, and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) legislation in British Columbia. For each piece of legislation, we outline why it is important to employers and how it relates to DEIA, who and what it applies to, the latest date of amendment, the key requirements for employers (highlighting how the legislation specifically affects workplace practices), and the penalties for non-compliance. This guide is intended for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

We encourage organizations to use this guide as a starting point for understanding their obligations under the law. However, this guide is not exhaustive and there are details, exceptions, and nuances in the legislation that require further reading or consultation to fully understand and apply. Additionally, while the information and links provided are accurate at the time of publication, this guide is not updated with every legislative change. Users should review the relevant legislation to confirm current requirements.

While compliance with the law is the baseline, we also recommend that organizations go beyond compliance where possible, proactively building workplaces that prioritize safety, inclusion, and equity in policies, practices, and culture.

Note that this resource covers legislation specific to one province or territory. A Canadian federal legislation guide is also available.

Accessible British Columbia Act

Why this legislation matters

Provincial accessibility law aims to reduce barriers and create more equitable workplaces in British Columbia. By setting shared standards and requiring organizations to plan for accessibility, they help ensure that people with disabilities can participate fully in employment and access services without discrimination.

Applies to

- Educational institutions of all kinds including school districts and schools.
- Municipalities and municipal departments.
- A full list of organizations were clarified through the [Accessible British Columbia Regulation](#), approved 2022-04-14.

Latest amendment

- 2021-06-17

Requirements for employers

- Create accessibility plans, committees, and progress reporting structures together with people with disabilities.
- Plans must include:
 - Creating community tools, resources and trainings about accessibility.
 - Finding new ways for employees, customers, and members of the public to provide feedback about accessibility and barriers encountered when accessing physical buildings or written materials.

Penalties for non-compliance

- May include a government inspection, compliance agreements, or monetary fines up to \$250,000.

Further reading

- [Accessible British Columbia Act](#)
- [BC Accessibility Hub](#)

British Columbia Human Rights Code

Why this legislation matters

The British Columbia Human Rights Code (BCHRC) sets the minimum legal standards for creating a fair, respectful, and discrimination-free workplace. The BCHRC prohibits discrimination based on [protected grounds](#) in several key areas including employee treatment, union membership, and access to services and facilities.

Applies to

- People, employers, landlords, service providers, and organizations operating in British Columbia. This includes:
 - Employers in both the private and public sectors.
 - Landlords, property managers, and service providers.
 - Unions and professional associations.
 - Provincial government bodies and agencies.

Latest amendment

- 2023-03-30

Requirements for employers

- Prohibit discrimination in the workplace.
- Provide reasonable accommodations for needs related to disability, religion, or other protected grounds, to the point of undue hardship.
- Maintain a workplace free from harassment and respond appropriately to complaints.
- Any job requirement that has a discriminatory effect must be justified as reasonably necessary and impossible to accommodate without undue hardship.

Penalties for non-compliance

- Employers may be required to pay lost wages, expenses, and damages.
- The Tribunal can order the employer to stop discrimination, reinstate an employee, change policies, implement training, or take other remedial steps (and in rare cases, award costs for improper conduct).

Further reading

- [British Columbia Human Rights Code](#)
- [For employers and workers](#), Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

Employment Standards Act

Why this legislation matters

The Employment Standards Act sets out the minimum standards for employment, promoting fair treatment, encouraging open communication, and providing fair and efficient procedures for resolving disputes.

Applies to

- Most employers and employees in British Columbia, whether full-time, part-time, temporary, or casual, including employees in both the public and private sectors.
- Certain occupations and industries have their own rules or exemptions, like land surveyors, real estate agents, and certain professions such as accountants, engineers, physicians, and veterinarians.

Latest amendment

- 2025-11-27

Requirements for employers

- The Act sets out the minimum standards for things like:
 - Hours of work, rest periods, and overtime
 - Minimum wage
 - Vacation and general holidays
 - Leaves of absence (e.g., maternity or other job-protected leaves)
 - Termination notice and pay

Penalties for non-compliance

- Employers can be ordered to pay unpaid wages (with interest) and administrative penalties that escalate for repeat violations (e.g., \$500, \$2,500, \$10,000).
- The Branch can take collection action (e.g., liens or court enforcement), and in some cases company directors or officers can be held personally liable for unpaid wages.

Further reading

- [Employment Standards Act](#)
- [Searchable guide to the Employment Standards Act and Regulation](#), Government of British Columbia

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Why this legislation matters

This Act governs how provincial public bodies collect, use, and disclose personal information, as well as how the public can access government records. They ensure organizations handle personal information ethically and operate transparently.

Applies to

- All provincial public bodies such as provincial agencies and municipalities, post-secondary institutions, health authorities, and professional self-governing bodies.

Latest amendment

- 2025-05-01

Requirements for employers

- Take reasonable precautions to protect personal information from unauthorized access, collection, use, disclosure, or disposal.
- Only collect personal information necessary for employment purposes, and information must be used only for the purpose it was collected.
- Respond to employee requests to access or correct their personal information within required timelines.

Penalties for non-compliance

- Individual fines up to \$50,000.
- Organizational fines up to \$500,000.

Further reading

- [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)
- [FOIPPA Foundations \(free course\)](#), British Columbia Ministry of Citizens' Services
- [Tools for public agencies](#), Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia

Occupational Health & Safety Regulation

Why this legislation matters

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) works together with the [Workers Compensation Act](#) to ensure a safe and healthy work environment and defines the rights of workers to be informed, involved, and protected from unsafe conditions.

Applies to

- All employers and workers within the jurisdiction of the Government of British Columbia.

Latest amendment

- 2025-03-31

Requirements for employers

- Identify and control hazards, maintain equipment, and ensure safe work practices.
- Provide health and safety training, instruction, and supervision to workers.
- Develop workplace health and safety policies, programs, and procedures as required.
- Supply personal protective equipment (PPE), safety devices, and other equipment required under the Regulation, and make sure workers use them properly.
- Provide appropriate first aid equipment, facilities, and trained attendants.
- Where required, employers must consult and cooperate with joint health and safety committees or worker health and safety representatives.
- Report workplace injuries and incidents that meet reporting thresholds to WorkSafeBC and investigate to prevent recurrence.

Penalties for non-compliance

- WorkSafeBC can issue compliance orders, stop-work orders, and significant monetary administrative penalties (especially for high-risk or repeated violations).
- In serious cases (e.g., willful or reckless violations), employers can face prosecution under the Workers Compensation Act, leading to large fines and potential jail time.

Further reading

- [Occupational Health and Safety Regulation](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety](#), Government of British Columbia
- [Roles, rights & responsibilities](#), WorkSafeBC

Personal Information Protection Act

Why this legislation matters

The Personal Information Protection Act governs how private-sector organizations handle employee and customer personal information, including collection, use, storage, and disclosure. The Act ensures personal information is handled respectfully, securely, and fairly.

Applies to

- Private-sector organizations in British Columbia that collect, use, or disclose personal information, including businesses and corporations, nonprofits and charities, associations, unions, and co-ops, and others.

Latest amendment

- 2024-01-15

Requirements for employers

- Obtain informed consent to collect, use, or disclose personal information, unless a specific statutory exemption applies.
- Only collect personal information necessary for employment purposes, and information must be used only for the purpose it was collected.
- Take reasonable precautions to protect personal information from unauthorized access, disclosure, loss, or misuse.
- Respond to employee requests to access or correct their personal information.
- Keep personal information only as long as needed for its purpose and dispose of it securely when no longer required.

Penalties for non-compliance

- The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia (OIPC) can investigate complaints and issue binding orders requiring organizations to change practices to comply with the Act.
- Serious or willful violations can lead to prosecution and significant penalties.

Further reading

- [Personal Information Protection Act](#)
- [Guidance Documents](#), OIPC
- [Resources for private sector organizations](#), OIPC

Workers Compensation Act

Why this legislation matters

The Worker's Compensation Act establishes the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia, also referred to as [WorkSafeBC](#), which provides no-fault insurance coverage for workplace injuries and illnesses. The Act ensures all workers have equitable access to injury benefits, rehabilitation, and return-to-work supports, regardless of background or job type.

Applies to

- All employers and workers within the jurisdiction of the Government of British Columbia unless the employer is exempt.

Latest amendment

- 2025-01-01

Requirements for employers

- Apply for insurance coverage, including for contractors.
- Report on payroll and business changes.
- Provide a safe workplace.
- Report and investigate incidences and injuries.

Penalties for non-compliance

- Orders to comply and collection of costs.
- Significant administrative penalties up to \$816 148.69, depending on employer payroll amounts and other factors such as risk and intent.
- Serious or willful violations can lead to court prosecution.
- Employers who operate without coverage may be liable for workplace injury costs.

Further reading

- [Workers Compensation Act](#)
- [Employers' responsibilities](#), WorkSafeBC
- [Who does and does not need coverage](#), WorkSafeBC