

Employers' Right to Charge Employees for Mandatory Work Uniforms – Know The Laws Of Your Province



Many businesses require employees to wear uniforms or other special items of clothing to do their job. Employers generally have to pay for uniforms, especially when they bear the employer's name, logo, or are otherwise of limited value to somebody not working for the company. More precisely, employment standards laws in most jurisdictions restrict the employer's right to charge for or deduct the costs of mandatory uniforms from employees' wages. However, the extent of these restrictions and employee protections vary significantly by jurisdiction. Here's a quick summary from least to most restrictive:

- Employees subject to Federal and New Brunswick employment laws have the least protection to the extent that those jurisdictions authorize the government to establish restrictions on uniforms deductions but haven't actually published such regulations.*
- In Yukon, employees and unions have to apply to the government for uniform deduction limits.*
- Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut ban uniform deductions and charges but only if they result in employees earning less than the minimum wage.*
- Two provinces that bar uniform deductions and charges leave open loopholes—Ontario, where employers can charge employees for failing to return or returning uniforms damaged and Prince Edward Island, where employers can charge a deposit of up to 25% of uniform costs to protect against damage or failure to return.*
- British Columbia, Québec, and Saskatchewan have the most robust protections in the form of language stating that employers must furnish, clean, launder, and maintain mandatory uniforms at no cost to employees.*

Here's a summary of the current uniforms deduction rules in each part of Canada.

FEDERAL

1. The government may make regulations governing the charges or deductions for furnishing uniforms or other articles of wearing apparel that an employer may

require an employee to wear or requiring an employer in any specified circumstances to provide, maintain or launder uniforms or other articles of wearing apparel that the employer may require an employee to wear (*Canada Labour Code*, Sec. 181(d)).

2. No such regulations under Section 181(d) have been published.

ALBERTA

No employer may make a deduction from or receive payment out of earnings for the furnishing, use, repair or laundering of any uniforms or special articles of wearing apparel that the employer requires the employee to wear during the employee's hours of work (*Employment Standards Regs*, Sec. 13).

BRITISH COLUMBIA

1. An employer who requires an employee to wear special clothing must, without charge to the employee:
 1. provide the special clothing, and
 2. clean and maintain it in a good state of repair (unless the employee is bound by an agreement made in accordance with Item #2 below) (*Employment Standards Act* (ESA), Sec. 25(1)).
2. If an employer and the majority of the affected employees at a workplace agree that the employees will clean their own special clothing and maintain it in a good state of repair:
 1. the agreement binds all employees at that workplace who are required to wear special clothing,
 2. the employer must reimburse, in accordance with the agreement, each employee bound by the agreement for the cost of cleaning and maintaining the special clothing, and
 3. the employer must retain for 4 years records of the agreement and the amounts reimbursed (ESA, Sec. 25(2)).
3. The following are deemed to be wages owing and the ESA applies to their recovery:
 1. money received or deducted by an employer from an employee for providing, cleaning or maintaining special clothing,
 2. money an employer fails to reimburse under Item #2 above (ESA, Sec. 25(3)).

MANITOBA

1. An employer must not deduct any amount for a uniform that's unique to that employer, such as a uniform bearing the employer's name or logo of the employer, or that would be of no practical use to a person not employed by that employer (*Employment Standards Regs*, Sec. 19(2)(3)).
2. An employer must not require an employee, or prospective employee as a condition of employment, to purchase a uniform described in Item #1 at his or her own expense or to pay any other amount that the employer is prohibited by Item #1 from deducting from a payment of wages (*Employment Standards Regs*, Sec. 19(3)).
3. Violations of the above rules carry a potential administrative monetary penalty of \$500.

NEW BRUNSWICK

1. The government may, by regulation, fix the maximum amount, if any, that may be deducted from the minimum wage where the employer furnishes to the employee uniforms, laundry or other services, and prescribe the notification required to be given to the employee before employment (*Employment Standards Act*, Sec. 9(1)(g)).
2. No such regulation has been published.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

An employer must not require an employee to pay for a uniform where the uniform:

1. is unique to the employer's business operation; and
2. is identified with the employer's business operation,

to an extent that would make the uniform of no practical use to the employee if the employee's employment was terminated (*Labour Standards Act*, Sec. 36.1).

NOVA SCOTIA

No employer who requires an employee to wear a uniform, apron or smock may make any charge or deduction from the minimum wage fixed by the Minimum Wage Order for the purchase or laundering of such uniform, apron or smock, except that where such uniform is made of woolen or similar heavy material requiring dry-cleaning, the employer may charge the cost of dry cleaning to the employee (*Minimum Wage Order (General)*, Sec. 14).

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

An employer must not reduce an employee's wages below minimum wage for providing, maintaining or laundering any article of wearing apparel or uniform that the employer requires the employee to wear (*Employment Standards Regs*, Sec. 7(4)).

NUNAVUT

No employer may reduce the wages of an employee below the minimum wage for providing, maintaining or laundering any uniform or article of wearing apparel required by the employer to be worn by the employee (*Wages Regs*, Sec. 3(a)).

ONTARIO

1. *Employment Standards Act* (ESA) doesn't specifically address deductions for uniforms; however, Bill 105, *Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act, 2026* (the POWER Act), will add new ESA Section 13.1 limiting such deductions, as described below
2. An employer must not, directly or indirectly, require an employee to pay for a uniform or for any other prescribed item that the employee is required to wear while performing work, unless:

1. the employee loses the uniform or other prescribed item;
 2. the employee damages the uniform or other prescribed item in a manner that exceeds normal wear and tear;
 3. the employee and employer agree that the employee is to return the uniform or other prescribed item when the employee's employment ends and the employee fails to do so; or
 4. any other prescribed circumstances specified in the regulations exist (POWER Act/ESA, Sec. 13.1(1)).
3. If an employer repairs or launders a uniform or any other prescribed item, or arranges for another person to do so, the employer must not, directly or indirectly, require an employee to pay for the repair or laundering, unless:
1. the employee damages the uniform or other prescribed item in a manner that exceeds normal wear and tear; or
 2. any other circumstances specified in the regulations exist (POWER Act/ESA, Sec. 13.1(2)).
4. If an employer violates the above rules, the amount paid for the uniform or other prescribed item or for the repair or laundering of the uniform or other prescribed item is a debt owing to the employee and is enforceable under the ESA as if it were wages owing to the employee, subject to certain exceptions (POWER Act/ESA, Sec. 13.1(3)).

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

1. An employer must not withhold, deduct or require the return of all or part of an employee's pay to cover the cost of the employee's uniform or footwear, where it's unique to the employer's business and supplied or required by the employer (*Employment Standards Act* (ESA), Sec. 38(4)(b)).
2. An employer may, however, require an employee to give the employer a deposit of up to 25% of the cost of any uniform or footwear that the employer supplies for the use of the employee (ESA, Sec. 38(5)).
3. When an employee's employment ends, the employer must refund the above deposit on the return of the uniform or footwear (ESA, Sec. 38(6)).
4. No employer may require an employee to give the employer a deposit of more than 25% of the cost of any uniform or footwear that's supplied by the employer to the employee (ESA, Sec. 38(7)).

QUÉBEC

1. An employer that requires the wearing of special clothing must supply it free of charge to an employee who is paid the minimum wage (*Labour Standards Act* (LSA), Sec. 85).
2. The employer may not require an amount of money from an employee for the purchase, use or upkeep of special clothing if that would cause the employee to receive less than the minimum wage (LSA, Sec. 85).
3. The employer may not require an employee to pay for special clothing that identifies the employee as an employee of the employer's establishment (LSA, Sec. 85).
4. The employer may not require an employee to purchase clothing or accessories that are items in the employer's trade (LSA, Sec. 85).
5. Where an employer requires the use of material, equipment, raw materials or merchandise in the performance of a contract, the employer must furnish them free of charge to an employee who's paid the minimum wage (LSA, Sec. 85.1).

SASKATCHEWAN

1. No employer shall require an employee to purchase special clothing that identifies the employer's establishment (*Sask Employment Act* (Act), Sec. 2-36(4)).
2. An employer who requires an employee to wear a special article of clothing that identifies the employer's establishment must provide that special article of clothing free of cost to the employee (Act, Sec. 2-36(5)).
3. An employer who requires an employee, other than a registered nurse, to wear a uniform or any special article of wearing apparel:
 1. must provide, repair and launder that uniform or special article of wearing apparel free of cost to the employee; and
 2. must not make any deduction from the wages of the employee for providing, repairing or laundering that uniform or special article of wearing apparel (*Employment Standards Regs*, Sec. 8-2(4)).

YUKON TERRITORY

If on the application of the director or an employer, employee, or trade union representing directly affected employees, the board considers it necessary, it may set the charges or deductions for furnishing uniforms or other articles of wearing apparel that an employer may require an employee to wear, and require an employer in any specified circumstances to provide, maintain, or launder uniforms or other articles of wearing apparel that the employer requires an employee to wear (*Employment Standards Act*, Sec. 18(2)(d)).