

HR Insider Newsletter – July 2026



The July 2026 edition of the HR Insider Newsletter focuses on the practical workplace issues that tend to surface during the summer months, while also addressing some of the bigger structural questions HR leaders are managing right now. This month's issue looks at return-to-office versus remote flexibility, access to personnel files, statutory holiday pay mistakes, harassment complaints, key employment law updates, recent case alerts, and the importance of conducting a summer HR policy audit.


One of the central themes in this issue is the ongoing return-to-office debate. The newsletter moves beyond the simple question of whether employees should work remotely or in person and instead focuses on how organizations can design a work model that supports productivity, engagement, fairness, and long-term resilience. It explains the difference between return-to-office policies, hybrid arrangements, and remote flexibility, while recognizing that not every sector or role can be treated the same way. Knowledge-based roles may benefit from remote work and deep-focus time, while construction, healthcare, manufacturing, retail, hospitality, education, and hands-on training environments often require physical presence.

The article also makes an important point about change management. Abrupt return-to-office mandates can damage trust, morale, and retention if employees feel the decision is arbitrary or poorly explained. HR leaders are encouraged to communicate early, explain the business rationale, gather employee feedback, phase in changes where possible, train managers to lead hybrid teams, and monitor the impact on engagement, productivity, and turnover. The takeaway is that successful workplace models are not built around control alone. They require clarity, empathy, consistency, and a realistic understanding of how work actually gets done.

The July issue also includes an Ask the Expert feature on access to personnel files. The newsletter explains that whether an employee is entitled to receive performance reviews or other documents from their personnel file depends on the jurisdiction, the type of employer, privacy legislation, workplace policies, collective agreements, and whether legal proceedings are involved. In federally regulated workplaces, and in provinces such as British Columbia and Alberta, privacy laws generally give employees access to their personal information, which may include performance reviews. In Ontario's private sector, however, there is no broad statutory right for employees to inspect their personnel file outside specific circumstances.

For HR teams, the practical lesson is that personnel files should be organized,

accurate, professional, and defensible. Performance reviews, disciplinary records, attendance notes, investigation documents, and related materials may eventually be reviewed by the employee, a union, a court, a tribunal, or a regulator. Employers should also know when records may be withheld, such as where disclosure would reveal confidential business information, solicitor-client privileged material, or personal information about another employee.

Another standout article focuses on statutory holiday pay mistakes Canadian employers continue to make. What may look like a simple payroll issue can become a serious compliance problem when employees are part-time, casual, remote, working variable schedules, working across multiple provinces, or receiving substitute holidays. The newsletter highlights a common problem: employers often apply the wrong jurisdiction's rules or rely on assumptions about employee status instead of checking the applicable employment standards legislation. 

The statutory holiday pay article is especially useful because it connects HR, payroll, scheduling, and management practices. Employers need to confirm which jurisdiction applies to each employee, review eligibility rules, prepare accurate payroll codes, document substitute holidays, train managers, and audit calculations regularly. With more employees working remotely from different provinces, work-location records are becoming more important than ever. The message is simple: holiday pay compliance depends on process, documentation, and coordination, not guesswork.

The July newsletter also provides a thoughtful guide to handling harassment complaints with care. This article is a strong reminder that the first response to a complaint can shape everything that follows. HR leaders and managers must listen without judgment, acknowledge the concern seriously, avoid jumping to conclusions, and explain the process clearly. The article also warns against dismissive language that can make a complainant feel invalidated, even when the comment is well-intended.



The harassment article walks through the key elements of a fair process, including documenting the complaint, assessing immediate risk, maintaining confidentiality, conducting a neutral investigation, communicating with both parties, evaluating findings objectively, and closing the loop appropriately. It also emphasizes the importance of neutral language, avoiding gossip or speculation, and making sure interim measures do not appear punitive. The broader takeaway is that harassment complaints are not just legal files. They are moments that test employee trust, psychological safety, and organizational culture.

For readers who rely on HR Insider to stay current on employment law and compliance developments, the Month-in-Review section provides a useful scan of updates across Canada. The July issue highlights new federal equal treatment rules under the Canada Labour Code, Alberta's interprovincial trade mutual recognition legislation, upcoming pension changes in British Columbia, Manitoba's new adoption and surrogacy leave, New Brunswick's pay transparency legislation, Ontario's proposed ban on charging employees for required uniforms, Québec's proposed Health Services Fund contribution holiday for certain sectors, and Yukon workers' compensation rebates, among other developments.

The case alerts section adds practical value by showing how HR compliance issues are being interpreted by arbitrators, courts, and tribunals. This month's cases cover drug and alcohol restrictions for safety-sensitive employees, vaccine-related religious accommodation, age discrimination and retirement discussions, constructive

dismissal risk when ending long-term remote work arrangements, race discrimination in a termination decision, and fiduciary duty claims involving a former co-owner. Together, these cases underline an important point: HR decisions must be grounded in evidence, process, consistency, and clear documentation.

One of the most important case alerts involves return-to-office and constructive dismissal. A BC court found that requiring a Marketing VP to return to the office after more than three years of working from home amounted to constructive dismissal, even though the arrangement was not written into the employment contract. The case is a timely warning for employers that long-standing remote work arrangements can become implied terms of employment. Employers should be careful before changing remote or hybrid arrangements, especially where employees have been allowed to work from home for an extended period.

The issue closes with a practical summer HR policy audit. This article reminds employers that summer problems are not random surprises. Vacation conflicts, statutory holidays, heat, wildfire smoke, students and seasonal workers, dress code issues, social events, remote work requests, and accommodation needs happen every year. The strongest HR teams treat these as predictable operational risks and prepare for them in advance.

The summer audit encourages employers to review vacation scheduling rules, statutory holiday payroll, heat stress procedures, wildfire smoke plans, onboarding for students and seasonal workers, dress code and PPE expectations, remote work location approvals, workplace event and alcohol policies, accommodation triggers, emergency communication channels, and post-summer review practices. The practical message is clear: summer may feel informal, but the workplace is not. HR still needs consistent rules, clear escalation points, proper documentation, and manager training.

Overall, the July 2026 HR Insider Newsletter is a timely and useful issue for HR leaders, payroll teams, managers, and executives. It connects major workplace trends, such as return-to-office and remote work, with day-to-day compliance risks involving holiday pay, personnel files, harassment complaints, seasonal operations, and policy management. If your organization is trying to improve consistency, reduce legal risk, and help managers make better workplace decisions, this month's edition is well worth reading.

Key takeaways from this issue

1. Budget-season stress should be managed as a workplace risk, not dismissed as normal pressure.
2. Employee privacy concerns on job sites may trigger safety obligations even where privacy law does not provide a simple answer.
3. Termination pay for irregular workweeks requires careful averaging and jurisdiction-specific compliance.
4. Removing "Canadian experience" from job ads is only the first step. Employers need structured, defensible hiring systems.
5. AI-based monitoring and employee surveillance can create serious privacy risk when the technology goes beyond what is necessary and proportionate.
6. Remote work has not eliminated housing-related retention pressure. It has changed where that pressure shows up.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW THIS MONTH

https://hrinsider.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/10638251_17822383941.mp3

IMPORTANT DATES

- [HR COMPLIANCE CALENDAR](#)

- July 1–Nationwide–Canada Day statutory holiday.
- July 1–Ontario–New *Digital Security* [regulations](#) for public hospitals, schools, and other public sector entities take effect.
- July 1–Ontario–Revised [OHS regulations](#) governing respirator standards take effect.
- July 7–British Columbia–Deadline to [comment](#) on new *Construction Prompt Payment Act*.
- July 8–Alberta–Deadline [to comment](#) on *OHS Code* as part of regular three-year review.
- July 9–Nunavut–Nunavut Day statutory holiday.
- July 10–Federal–Deadline to [comment](#) on [proposed changes](#) to *Privacy Act*.
- July 13–Newfoundland & Labrador–Orangeman Day statutory holiday.
- July 15–Federal–[New regulations](#) for immigration consultants take effect.
- July 15–Newfoundland & Labrador–Deadline to [apply](#) for Job Creation Partnership funding grants.
- July 16–Nova Scotia–Deadline to [apply](#) for OHPR Community Fund grants for recruiting healthcare workers.

THIS MONTH'S CONTENT IN FULL

- [Return-to-Office vs. Remote Flexibility](#)
- [Access to Personnel Files Ask the Expert](#)
- [Statutory Holiday Pay Mistakes Canadian Employers Keep Making and How HR Can Prevent Payroll Compliance Problems](#)
- [Handling Harassment Complaints with Care: A Guide for HR Leaders](#)
- [Month-In-Review](#)
- [The Summer HR Policy Audit](#)

ADDITIONAL TOOLS AND READING

- [Implement an effective fitness for duty policy to control substance abuse at your workplace.](#)
- [Avoid religious and other forms of discrimination when enforcing a mandatory vaccination policy.](#)
- [Implement a legally sound age discrimination policy at your workplace.](#)
- [How to end telecommuting arrangements without committing constructive dismissal.](#)
- [Beware of certain kinds of seemingly legitimate employment practices that may have the effect of inadvertently perpetuating racial discrimination and increasing your liability risks.](#)
- [Find out more about when employees owe a fiduciary duty to their company.](#)