

# Monthly Compliance Briefing for HR Directors of Federally Regulated Companies



November was an active month on the employment law regulatory front headlined by legislative and policy changes affecting trade, labour mobility, payroll, immigration, pensions, and workplace safety. Here's a quick briefing of the developments HR directors of federally regulated companies need to know about.

## **Free Trade & Labour Mobility**

All 14 of Canada's governments signed a new Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement (CMRA) that comes into force in December, harmonizing compliance requirements for thousands of goods across the country—excluding food—and reducing barriers to interprovincial business. Complementing this, new federal regulations (effective January 1) will recognize provincially compliant goods and services as federally compliant, while enabling workers certified in a province or territory to work in equivalent federally regulated occupations.

These developments are a ripple effect of the U.S. tariffs, as is the push of governments to make a point of procuring goods and services from Canadian companies in awarding contracts. In November, the federal government expanded its Buy Canadian Policy by adding a new Small and Medium Business Procurement Program targeting defense-sector contracts.

## **Important New Employment Legislation**

Meanwhile, Parliament is back in session with a docket full of new legislation affecting HR operations, including payroll. Bill C-4 proposes reductions to the lowest federal income-tax bracket in 2025 and 2026 and adds a temporary GST new-housing rebate for first-time buyers. Budget 2025 also proposes a five-year Personal Support Workers Tax Credit for jurisdictions without federal wage-increase agreements.

Pension rules may change via Bill C-256, which would allow survivors to receive pension benefits even when a conjugal relationship began after age 60 or retirement. Additional reforms include Bill S-206, which would require a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income.

Immigration developments include Bill C-3, which expands citizenship-by-descent

eligibility and is awaiting Royal Assent. Budget 2025 also proposes \$97 million to launch a Foreign Credential Recognition Action Fund, aimed at speeding up credential processing for internationally trained workers.

Workplace violence and safety also remain priorities. Bill S-233 would make assaults on health-service providers or first responders an aggravating factor in sentencing. Canada also lost its measles elimination status from the Pan American Health Organization following a prolonged multijurisdictional outbreak, prompting renewed attention to exposure-control and vaccination policies.

## Employment Regulation Developments

Federal government agencies are also working on important new regulations that may affect your company, including a Competition Bureau consultation on updated Merger Enforcement Guidelines and the proposed \$75 million expansion of the Union Training and Innovation Program (UTIP). In addition, GHS 7 WHMIS changes to Safety Data Sheet and other requirements take effect on January 1.

## HR Court Cases

There were also a couple of noteworthy court cases handed down in November. In *Canadian Merchant Service Guild v Treasury Board*, an arbitrator approved a 2% wage increase for 2025 but rejected an additional market adjustment for Ship Officers.

And in *Juzda v. Canada (Attorney General)*, the Federal Court of Appeal confirmed that generalized COVID fears do not justify a work refusal where no specific workplace danger is established.

## Action Points & Takeaways for HR Directors

- Expect fewer barriers to hiring certified or accredited workers from other parts of Canada.
- Begin your year-end payroll balancing process for 2025.
- Review pension and survivor-benefit plan language for potential amendments.
- Anticipate government procurement shifts tied to Buy Canadian policy initiatives.
- Review your workplace violence prevention program and ensure it accounts for [risks of domestic violence in the workplace](#).
- Review your SDS binders and systems [to comply with the new WHMIS GH 7 requirements](#).
- Create a legally and clinically sound workplace [Exposure Control Plan](#) to protect your employees against risk of measles and other infectious illnesses.