The 10 Most Important New HR Laws of 2026 & What to Do About Them

Part of your job as HR director is to brief your CEO and other executive officers about the new safety laws and regulations that impact your company and its HR program. That should include a mid-year briefing. Here are the 10 most significant employment laws that have come down so far in 2026 to include in your briefing, along with a series of action points to take to ensure compliance with each law.

1. New Employee Leave Rights Across Canada

Changes: Seven jurisdictions enacted new employment standards leave entitlements within the past six months. British Columbia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island created long-term illness and injury leave while Alberta extended leave duration. The federal jurisdiction established termination of pregnancy/stillborn leave and expanded bereavement leave entitlement. And Ontario became the first jurisdiction in Canada to adopt job search leave for victims of group terminations.

Table 1. New 2026 Employee Leave Entitlements by Province

Jurisdiction	**Employee Leave Rights (all leaves unpaid unless specifically noted)**
Federal	• 3 days Termination of Pregnancy Leave • 8 weeks Stillbirth Pregnancy Leave, including 3 days paid • 8 weeks Child Death Bereavement Leave • First 3 of 10 days of Bereavement Leave are now paid
Alberta	Long-Term Injury and Illness Leave extended from 16 to 27 weeks
British Columbia	27 weeks Long-Term Injury and Illness Leave
Manitoba	16 weeks Adoption or Child Surrogacy Leave
New Brunswick	27 weeks Long-Term Injury and Illness Leave
Ontario	3 days Job Search Leave for employees affected by group termination of 50 or more
Prince Edward Island	• 27 weeks Medical Leave • 1 day Citizenship Ceremony Leave

What To Do: Long-term injury and illness and sick leave rights have expanded dramatically since COVID-19. So, audit your leave policies to ensure they comply with current legal requirements and implement a legally sound Long-Term Injury and Illness Leave Compliance Game Plan at your workplace.

2. Ontario & New Brunswick Join the Pay Transparency Frenzy

Changes: Pay transparency legislation continues to gain momentum across the country. This year, Ontario and New Brunswick jumped on the bandwagon and it's only a matter of time before other provinces do likewise.

What To Do: Pay transparency laws essentially require employers to do three things:

- Disclose how much advertised jobs pay (the phrase "*salary: competitive*" has become an endangered species)—in Ontario, ads must also disclose whether the position is vacant and how the employer uses artificial intelligence (AI) in the hiring process.
- Not ask job applicants to disclose their own salary history.
- Refrain from punishing employees and job applicants for discussing their wages with each other.

Find out how to implement a Pay Transparency Compliance Game Plan at your workplace.

3. New Duty of Ontario Employers to Get Back to Job Interviewees

Changes: Effective January 1, 2026, Ontario employers with 25 or more employees must notify those who interview for publicly advertised jobs of whether a hiring decision has been made within 45 days of the most recent interview date, or face *Employment Standards Act* (ESA) penalties.

What To Do: Although it's not strictly illegal outside of Ontario, not getting back to the applicants you interview is one of the 10 hiring and recruiting practices that you should stop using right now. Find out about the other nine and why they're problematic.

4. Free Trade & Labour Mobility Laws Take Effect Across Canada

Changes: In response to U.S. tariffs, most Canadian jurisdictions have or are in the process of enacting new laws to eliminate the regulatory barriers that impede the flow of goods, services, and labour across provincial boundaries. The legal ramifications of these free trade laws may directly affect HR operations like recruiting, employment contracting, payroll administration, and workplace safety.

What To Do: The new "mutual recognition" rules make it easier to hire Canadians with out-of-province licences. However, they don't eliminate the need to verify their credentials. Before issuing a job offer, check the free trade laws of your own province to:

- Ensure that they cover the applicant's occupation.
- Verify that the applicant has the necessary comparable credentials.
- Determine whether any exceptions or special requirements apply.

Find out about more about how the new interprovincial free trade and labour mobility regulations impact HR operations.

5. Federal Government Extends Temporary Relaxation of EI Work Sharing Rules

Changes: The federal government created the Employment Insurance (EI) Work Sharing Program to help companies experiencing significant decreases in normal work levels for reasons beyond their control avoid temporary layoffs. When Trump began imposing his tariffs in 2025, Employment and Social Development Canada temporarily relaxed program rules to make it easier for companies to take advantage of Work Sharing. The expanded eligibility criteria, longer duration limits, and other temporary changes were due to expire in March 2026, but Service Canada extended them for at least one more year.

What To Do: If your company is struggling right now, don't hit the temporary layoffs button until you give Work Sharing a look. Find out about the 10 things HR directors need to know about the program to help their organizations take advantage of it.

6. New OHS Administrative Monetary Penalties in Ontario, Manitoba & Yukon

Changes: In addition to fines, many provinces allow government Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) inspectors to issue administrative monetary penalties (AMPs) without going to court. Last year, Ontario became the ninth jurisdiction to allow AMPs for OHS violations (the others are Alberta, BC, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, the three territories, and the federal jurisdiction). This year, Manitoba and Yukon expanded their AMP regimes to include failure to report OHS incidents and/or workers' compensation offences.

What To Do: AMPs can also be imposed for employment standards violations in many provinces. HR directors need to understand the stakes. AMPs aren't just about the money. Like employment standards penalties, AMPs create a record of non-compliance that inspectors may consider in imposing future AMPs and convicting courts may deem an aggravating factor calling for a higher fine. Many provinces publish the names of companies that receive AMPs. Given these stakes, companies on the receiving end of AMPs should seriously consider whether to appeal.

7. New Employer Workplace Sexual Violence Prevention Duties in Québec

Changes: On May 27, the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) published new OHS regulations requiring Québec employers to take measures to prevent workplace sexual violence and psychological harassment (SCV), including: i. give workers written information about SCV risks at the particular workplace; ii. ensure workers receive SCV prevention training by a competent person; iii. implement SCV reporting and complaint procedures; and implement SCV investigation protocols. Effective date: May 27, 2027 (except for training rules which take effect on May 27, 2028).

What To Do: Sexual and domestic violence becomes an HR compliance issue when it occurs in the victim's workplace. Find out how to protect your employees from the risk of workplace domestic violence and incorporate domestic violence into your broader workplace violence policy.

8. Prince Edward Island Overhauls Its Employment Standards

Changes: After years of study and public consultations, PEI completely revised its *Employment Standards Act*. Key changes to the new ESA 2.0, which took effect on June 30, 2026, include:

- Unpaid medical leave of up to 27 consecutive weeks for employees with at least 90 days' continuous service.
- Increase in paid sick days from three to four for employees with at least 30 days' service;
- New Citizenship Ceremony Leave of one unpaid day.
- Increase in paid vacation to two weeks of paid vacation after years one to four of employment and to three weeks after year five.
- Reduction in maximum work week from 48 to 44 hours.
- Termination notice required after 90 days of employment, rather than six months.
- New duty to provide at least six weeks' notice when laying off a large group of staff within a two-month period.
- New duty to provide employees a written work schedule at least one week in advance.
- New right of employers and employees to enter into written averaging of hours agreements over a two- to four-week period.
- New duty of employers to list paid holiday pay and pay for any paid leave on an employee's written pay statement.
- New duty of employers to post their tip pooling policy in the workplace;.
- Statute of limitation for employee ESA complaints extended from one year to two years.
- Employers now face administrative monetary penalties (AMPs) for violations.

What To Do: Employers subject to PEI employment standards laws must review their leave, overtime, vacation, work scheduling, termination notice, payroll statement, and other HR policies and practices and make the changes necessary to ensure compliance with the new ESA 2.0.

9. Saskatchewan Gives Payroll Administrators More Flexibility Over Work Hour Calculations

Changes: Employers may now use either a calendar day or 24-consecutive hour period for purposes of determining *Saskatchewan Employment Act* (SEA) work schedules, rest periods, and overtime requirements. Employers must list the formula they use to calculate a day on required work schedule notices. The SEA amendments that took effect on January 1 also increase the threshold for mandatory notification of group terminations from 10 to 25 employees while imposing new limits on asking employees for doctor's notes to verify their need for sick leave, maternity leave, interpersonal violence leave, and bereavement leave.

What To Do: Saskatchewan is only one of many provinces to ban doctor's notes for short-term absences. 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.

10. Québec Allows Employers to Claim Job Training Tax Credit for Telecommuters

Changes: Recognizing the prevalence of remote work and telecommuting, Revenu Québec began allowing businesses to claim the refundable job training tax credit for a student or apprentice that serves the required on-the-job training period hours even if they do so from a remote location without being physically present in the company’s Québec establishment.

What To Do: Find out about the 8 important new payroll changes that affect your current year T4 filings and 2026 source deductions, both in and outside of Québec.