

Welcome to British Columbia: Information for Temporary Foreign Workers *in British Columbia*



The government of British Columbia supports welcoming communities where newcomers, including Temporary Foreign Workers, can feel comfortable and contribute to the economic, cultural and social well being of the province.

As a Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW), there may be some restrictions on the terms of your employment, including the location of your job and who you can work for. However, as a worker and as a temporary resident of British Columbia, your rights are protected by the laws and regulations that protect all British Columbians. You are entitled to the same protections—and the same services to guarantee those protections—as all British Columbians.

This document provides a snapshot of the agencies that can help you during your stay in B.C. You will find information on the right agency to contact to answer your questions, what services they provide, and how to contact them. You can contact these agencies if you have a complaint, or even a simple question about your rights and responsibilities. These agencies are here to help you, just as they help all British Columbians; and many of them offer this help in multiple languages.

For more information, just visit the Government of B.C.'s WelcomeBC website, which has a special section to help Temporary Foreign Workers: www.WelcomeBC.ca

Employment

As a worker in B.C. your rights are protected by the Employment Standards Act. The Employment Standards Branch (ESB) is responsible for protecting workers' rights. You should contact ESB if you experience any problems with your employment – including questions about your hours of work and overtime, vacation or statutory holidays, entitlements, your wages, wage deductions, employment termination, or if you have any other

questions about your rights as a worker. If you are part of a union through your employment, you should contact your union representative to receive information about their protections and your rights and responsibilities.

You can find more detailed information on your rights on the Government of B.C.'s ESB webpage, which provides information in several different languages.

WEBSITE: <http://www.labour.gov.bc.ca/esb/>

YOU CAN CONTACT ESB:

BY PHONE: 1 800 663-3316 (Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.)

BY E-MAIL: EnquiryBC@gov.bc.ca

IN PERSON: ESB has offices in Burnaby, Dawson Creek, Kelowna, Langley, Nanaimo, Nelson, Prince George, Terrace, and Victoria.

Contact information for these offices is available at: <http://www.labour.gov.bc.ca/esb/contact/branch.htm>

LANGUAGES: ESB is able to provide assistance over the phone or in person in a number of foreign languages. Certain information on its website is also translated into different languages.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Your employer cannot change the conditions of your contract without your consent;
- Unless your work permit is revoked, you're able to stay in Canada for the full length of your visa, even if you no longer work for your original employer;
- If you're a TFW in a lower skilled occupation, your employer must pay for your return airfare, even if you have not completed your contract.

Workplace Safety

When you work in B.C., you have the right to a safe work environment and that right is protected by Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. WorkSafeBC is responsible for protecting workers' rights and promoting a safe work environment. You should always speak to your employer first if you have any questions or concerns about safety in the work place. If your employer is not responsive and

you continue to experience conditions at work that are unnecessarily dangerous or violate safety standards, you should contact WorkSafeBC.

You can find information on B.C. workplace safety standards at the Government of British Columbia's WorkSafeBC website. This information is available in eight languages.

WEBSITE: <http://www.worksafebc.com/>

YOU CAN CONTACT WORKSAFEBC:

BY PHONE: 1-888-621-7233 (Mon - Fri 8:30 am- 4:30 pm)

BY E-MAIL: To E-mail, go to the following website: http://www.worksafebc.com/contact_us/e-mail_us/

IN PERSON: WorkSafeBC has offices in Courtenay, Nanaimo, Victoria, Abbotsford, Burnaby, Coquitlam, North Vancouver, Surrey,

Vancouver, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nelson, Fort St. John, Prince George, and Terrace. Contact information for these offices can be found at: http://www.worksafebc.com/contact_us/

LANGUAGES: Information on the website is available in eight languages. You can also contact them for services by phone or in person in 170 different languages.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 173,538 injuries were reported in B.C. in 2007 and 93.4% of the injury claims were approved;
- If you need to take an ambulance or other transportation from your workplace to your doctor's office or the hospital after an injury while working, your employer must pay those costs;
- Your employer must report any workplace injury or disease to WorkSafeBC. Telling you not to report an injury or disease is against the law.
- You cannot be fired (or penalized) for refusing to do work that is unsafe, or for reporting an unsafe working condition.

Immigration – British Columbia's Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP)

With your employers' help, you may be able to secure permanent residence through the BC PNP. The BC PNP allows employers to sponsor foreign employees in certain occupations, so that the worker and his/her family can request permanent residence in Canada. In order to take

part in the program, your employer needs to submit an application to nominate you.

To find out more about these opportunities and procedures, you should contact the BC PNP office.

WEBSITE: www.WelcomeBC.ca

YOU CAN CONTACT THE BC PNP:

BY PHONE: 604-775-2227

BY E-MAIL: PNPinfo@gov.bc.ca

LANGUAGES: The BC PNP provides services in English, but PNP staff can also provide information in more than a dozen languages.

DID YOU KNOW?

- You do not need to hire an immigration representative to apply for a visa or citizenship...you can do it yourself!
- Only CIC can determine whether you are eligible for temporary or permanent residence status in Canada (with the BC PNP and Service Canada having a role in choosing certain foreign workers). No other individual, agency or institution can guarantee or increase your chances of receiving a visa or work permit;
- You can find all the information and forms you need for the immigration process online at the WelcomeBC and CIC websites.

Immigration – Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

CIC is responsible for issues concerning immigration and work permits including temporary and permanent immigration. If you have questions regarding opportunities to extend your stay, applying for permanent

residence, changing your employer, or questions about your residency rights as a TFW, you should contact CIC to determine the right options and procedures for you.

WEBSITE: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/>

BY PHONE: 1-888-242-2100 (Mon-Fri: 8:00am-4:00pm)

LANGUAGES: CIC provides services in English and French.

Changes to Your Employment Status

Your Work Permit may limit you to a specific employer. If this is the case, and you are laid off by your employer or if you resign, you must receive a new work permit before you can work for another employer. To do this, your new employer will need to seek permission to hire you. Once your new employer has received this permission, you will have to apply to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) for a new work permit. You must receive your new work permit before you can begin your new job. To find out more information about this process you should contact CIC (see information in the section about Immigration).

As a Temporary Foreign Worker, you are NOT entitled to use the job search or training services provided for new immigrants or unemployed British Columbians. If you lose your job and want to find a new employer in Canada, you can contact industry associations, employers, or use the job listing on the internet and in local newspapers.

Depending upon the length of time you were employed, and the region you worked in, you may be eligible for Employment Insurance when you're unemployed.

To be eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) you must have been laid off through no fault of your own – this means you did not quit voluntarily and you were not fired for misconduct. You must have been unemployed for at least seven days before you make an Employment Insurance claim.

Also, you need to have worked a certain number of hours before your claim to receive the benefits, depending on the unemployment rate in your region. In most cases, you need to have worked between 420 and 700 hours to be eligible for EI.

To find out more and to make an application for Employment Insurance, you should contact your local Service Canada office:

WEBSITE: www.servicecanada.gc.ca

YOU CAN CONTACT SERVICE CANADA:

BY PHONE: 1-800-206-7218 (Mon-Fri: 8:00am-4:00pm)

BY E-MAIL: Not Available

IN PERSON: There are 36 Service Canada centres throughout the Province.

For information on how to reach these centres, visit the following website:

www.servicecanada.gc.ca/cgi-bin/hr-search.cgi?cmd=lst&pv=bc&ln=eng

LANGUAGES: Service Canada provides services in English and French.

DID YOU KNOW?

- If you are in Canada on a Work Permit that allows you to work only for a specific employer, you will need a new work permit and any new employer may need to get permission from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) before they are allowed to hire you;
- In regions, sectors, or occupations with higher unemployment levels, it can be difficult for employers to receive permission to hire foreign workers;
- If you are in Canada on an Open Work Permit (for example, the Working Holiday Visa, or Student Visas with an Off-Campus Work Permit), an employer doesn't need permission from HRSDC to hire you;
- Industry sectors often have employer associations that can help them to hire new workers, or match workers with employers.

Healthcare

For you to qualify for coverage with B.C.'s medical plan, your Work Permit must be valid for six or more months. As a new resident to B.C., you will receive health coverage only after you have completed a waiting period. The wait period is calculated as the balance of the month in which you became a B.C. resident, plus two months. For example, if you became a B.C. resident on September 10th, 2009, you would be eligible for medical coverage on December 1, 2009. If your Work Permit limits you to a certain employer, that employer must make sure you have health insurance when you arrive in B.C.

The agency responsible for the Medical Services Plan (MSP) is the B.C. Ministry of Health Services. MSP will cover a number of basic healthcare needs such as visits to the doctor or to the hospital. It does not include expenses such as dentistry, optometry or ambulance services. It is your employer's responsibility to enroll you in MSP when you arrive in B.C.

In addition to this basic coverage, your employer or union may offer you healthcare coverage for additional services.

To find out more about your coverage under MSP, you should contact MSP:

WEBSITE: <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp>

YOU CAN CONTACT MSP:

BY PHONE: Vancouver: 1 604 683-7151; Other: 1 800 663-7100

BY E-MAIL: [msпетенquiries@hibc.gov.bc.ca](mailto:mспенquiries@hibc.gov.bc.ca) (general enquiries only)

IN PERSON: Service BC – Government Agent offices located throughout the province can assist with enquiries about MSP. Contact information for these offices can be found at: <http://www.servicebc.gov.bc.ca/index.html>

LANGUAGES: Services are provided in English.

DID YOU KNOW?

- If you are working in a 'low skilled' occupation and have a work permit with a specific employer, that employer must provide medical coverage until you are eligible for provincial health insurance coverage;
- If you are in B.C. on an Open Work Permit (for example, an International Student with a work permit, or on a Working Holiday Visa) you are responsible to ensure your own healthcare coverage;
- Medical exams that are required for employment, immigration or other reasons are not covered by MSP.

Settlement Services

Settlement Agencies provide services to new residents of Canada to assist them in integrating into Canadian society. They provide services such as English Classes, Job Search Classes, and Community Orientation.

As a Temporary Foreign Worker, you may not be able to access most of these services. These services are usually only offered to persons arriving in Canada as Permanent Residents.

If you are interested in finding out about other services that may be available to you, you should speak with your employer.

Additional Information

- Each community in B.C. provides essential services to residents such as garbage disposal and recycling, library services, community centres, and recreation centres. The range of services available depends on the community you live in. To find out more, you should contact a city worker at City Hall or a community centre.
- Certain organizations may also be available in your community to assist Temporary Foreign Workers with information, referral or emergency services.
- For more information visit the following website:

www.WelcomeBC.ca/en/immigration/index.html

Housing

When you rent a place to live in B.C., you have certain rights and responsibilities to your landlord and the rented property. As a tenant in B.C. your rights are protected by the *Residential Tenancy Act*. The Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB) in the B.C. Ministry of Housing and Social Development is the agency responsible for protecting tenant and owner rights, and solving rental disputes. The RTB can help you to understand your landlord's

responsibility to keep the property up to date with health, safety, and housing standards, and can also help you to better understand your responsibilities. The RTB can also answer questions about leases, fees, and contracts.

You can find information on your rights as a tenant on the RTB website. The RTB also has an information sheet in 12 different languages.

WEBSITE: <http://www.rto.gov.bc.ca/content/publications/factSheets.aspx#129>

YOU CAN CONTACT THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCY BRANCH FROM MONDAY
- FRIDAY 8:30AM-4:30PM:

BY PHONE: 250 387-1602 in Victoria
604 660-1020 in the Lower Mainland
1-800-665-8779 in the rest of the province

BY E-MAIL: HSRTO@gov.bc.ca

IN PERSON: The Residential Tenancy Branch has offices in Burnaby, Vancouver, Victoria, and Kelowna. Contact information for these offices can be found at: <http://www.rto.gov.bc.ca/content/contactUs/default.aspx> If you reside in an area that does not have an RTB office, you

can contact a Service BC office for support. For information on the location and contact details of Service BC offices, see the following website: <http://www.servicebc.gov.bc.ca/locations>

LANGUAGES: The Residential Tenancy Branch provides service in English. The Residential Tenancy Guide is available in English, Chinese (Traditional), and Punjabi. A brochure providing the basic information you'll need is available in English, French, Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), Tagalog, Japanese, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Your rental security deposit cannot be more than 50% of one month's rent;
- Your landlord cannot change the locks without your consent, and you have a right to have the landlord change the locks when you first move in;
- Your landlord must give you 3 months notice before increasing your rent and he/she can only increase your rent once every 12 months;
- Your landlord cannot increase your rent by more than the rate of inflation plus 2%;
- If your employer is providing your housing, they can deduct the housing costs from your salary. But the amount your employer deducts must be listed in your contract and on your pay stub.



WelcomeBC