

Federal

LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Emergency Response

Aug 12: Environment and Climate Change Canada changed its methods of issuing severe thunderstorm and tornado warnings. Improvements include speedier and more targeted warnings sent directly in English and French to people in affected polygon-configured areas along with more detailed tracking of individual storms.

Action Point: Use the OHS Insider template to create a legally sound [Emergency Preparedness & Response Policy](#) at your workplace.

Heat Stress

Aug 13: Employment Social Development Canada (ESDC) issued new Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) [guidance](#) to help employers and workers minimize health hazards in “hot environments,” including heat stress, hand grip impediments, and eye strain.

Action Point: Find out how to implement an effective [Heat Stress Safety & Compliance Game Plan](#) at your workplace.

Infectious Illness

Aug 4: Health Canada gave Moderna, the pharmaceutical firm that developed the first COVID-19 vaccine, the greenlight to move forward with a Phase I clinical trial for a potential vaccine for Ebola disease caused by the Bundibugyo virus. Canada is the second country to authorize a Phase I clinical trial for a Bundibugyo virus vaccine candidate after the U.K.

Action Point: Find out how to use the [OHSI Infection Exposure Control Plan](#) to protect workers from infectious illness.

Infectious Illness

Aug 28: Canada officially extended Ebola temporary border measures for another 30 days. **Result:** From now through September 29, Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and foreign travelers seeking to enter Canada who've been in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, or South Sudan within the previous 21 days must undergo assessment for Ebola upon arrival. Foreign nationals who were in the DRC within the past 21 days are banned from entering Canada due to the Ebola threat.

Action Point: Find out [whether fear of Ebola infection is grounds for an OHS work refusal](#).

New Laws

Aug 28: Ottawa announced that it will match the newly imposed 50% U.S. tariffs on \$27.6 billion of Canadian goods. Effective September 8, Canada will impose counter-tariffs of 15%, 25%, and 50% on U.S. products, with the rate for each product matching the corresponding U.S. rate. Canada's counter tariffs will apply to products covering \$27.6 billion in U.S. imports focusing on steel, dairy, appliances, agricultural

equipment, pulp and paper, electronics, and other sectors most impacted by U.S. tariffs.

Action Point: Find out about [how tariffs affect your OHS program](#).

New Laws

Aug 28: Canada announced a new \$7.5 billion package to support businesses and workers impacted by the latest round of U.S. tariffs, including: i. an additional \$1.5 billion in Regional Tariff Response Initiative funding for small and medium-sized enterprises; ii. a new \$500 million liquidity stream under the Business Development Bank of Canada's Pivot to Grow program to help businesses manage immediate cash-flow pressures; iii. lowering the minimum revenue requirement for Business Development Bank of Canada tariff programs to \$1 million; iv. an added \$2 billion Canada Strong Diversification Fund support for businesses with shovel-ready capital maintenance projects; and v. a new suite of \$3.5 billion Rapid Response Supports for Workers and Employers affected by tariffs.

Training

Aug 28: The federal government launched a new Sectoral Workforce Innovation Fund (SWIF) to support projects addressing skilled labour shortages across priority sectors. Projects eligible for SWIF funding could include faster training approaches, micro-credentials, skills assessments, targeted certification, and other programs to enabling Canadian workers to prepare for in-demand occupations and employers to manage skilled labour shortages.

New Laws

Jul 20: The federal government increased the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), a monthly tax-free payment to help families pay for raising children, to up to \$8,157 per child under the age of 6 and up to \$6,883 per child aged 6 to 17. That's a year-to-year increase of up to \$160 per child under age 6 and up to \$135 per child age 6 to 17.

New Laws

Aug 10: The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is introducing telephone reporting in areas formerly covered by the Remote Area Border Crossing (RABC) Program, including the Northwest Angle Area, Pigeon River, the Canadian shore of Lake Superior, Sault Ste. Marie, and Cockburn Island. Starting December 1, the RABC Program will close and all travellers entering Canada through remote areas of northern Ontario or the Northwest Angle into southern Manitoba, must report to the CBSA at a port of entry or designated telephone reporting site.

Action Point: Find out how to create a [Safety Policy for Business Travel to Dangerous Locations](#).

Industry Challenges

Aug 10: The federal government is offering oyster harvesters in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick a one-time payment of \$40,000 for voluntarily agreeing to the permanent retirement of their wild oyster licences and permits. The new Oyster Licence Retirement Grant Program is designed to ease pressure on wild oyster stocks which have diminished by the spread of the diseases MSX and Dermo.

New Laws

Jul 17: The federal government announced that it's expanding the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). Starting this month, the CCB will provide families with up to \$8,157 per child under the age of 6 and up to \$6,883 per child aged 6 to 17. That's a year-to-year increase of up to \$160 per child under age 6 and up to \$135 per child age 6 to 17.

Industry Challenges

Jul 31: The federal government imposed a temporary (200 days) 25% surtax on imports of certain wood cabinets and vanities, pending the results of a Canadian International Trade Tribunal safeguard inquiry to determine if increased imports are causing, or threatening to cause, serious injury to Canadian wood manufacturers. The Tribunal is expected to finish the inquiry and issue recommendations by January 15, 2027. If it finds no injury, the surtax, which doesn't cover trade partners the U.S., Mexico, Israel, and Chile, will end immediately.

Environmental

Aug 26: Revised *Canadian Environmental Protection Act Regulations* allow the federal government to issue administrative monetary penalties (AMPs) for violating the new ban on exporting "Hazardous Waste" (HW) and "Hazardous Reactive Material" (HRM) to non-OECD countries. The Regulations also clarify that persons intending to export shipments containing HW or HRM must hold a permit before moving the shipment.

CASES

Drugs & Alcohol: Safety-Sensitive Railway Worker Who Tests Positive Gets Reinstated

A railway worker with a history of safety violations had to undergo post-incident drug testing after an apprentice he was working got hit by a locomotive and broke his ankle. The test came back positive for marijuana and the worker got fired based on his total demerit points. The federal arbitrator upheld the union's grievance. While discipline was clearly in order, 60 demerit points for the incident was too much. So, the arbitrator reduced the penalty to 35 demerit points, putting the worker under the threshold for termination. Nor was the positive test just cause to terminate because the evidence showed that the worker had a drug-related disability that the railway had to reasonably accommodate. **Result:** The worker was reinstated for a two-year period under which he'd be subject to random testing and subject to termination if he failed [*IBEW, System Council No. 11 v Canadian National Railway Company*, 2026 CanLII 73002 (CA LA), July 21, 2026].

Action Point: The moral of this case is that alcohol and drug addictions are disabilities for which employers must make "reasonable accommodations" under anti-discrimination laws. Find out how to use the [OHS Insider Substance Abuse Compliance Game Plan](#) to curb drugs and alcohol at your workplace without violating workers' rights to reasonable accommodations.

Transportation Safety: Banning Older Pilots from Flying International Routes Is Age Discrimination

The union accused WestJet of age discrimination after the airline imposed restrictions on international flights for pilots ages 65 and over. WestJet claimed the new policy was a justifiable bona fide occupational requirement (BFOR) and mandated by International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) rules. The federal arbitrator sided with the union. Even if the policy was a BFOR under human rights law, the airline would still have a duty to reasonably accommodate affected pilots to the point of undue hardship. There were reasonable and ICAO-compliant options WestJet could have used to meet this duty, such as allowing older pilots to continue flying natural domestic routes in pairs with younger pilots. So, the arbitrator upheld the grievance and ordered WestJet to establish a comprehensive Accommodation Plan within seven days [[*Air Line Pilots Association, International v Westjet, an Alberta Partnership*](#), 2026 CanLII 85990 (CA LA), August 21, 2026].

Workplace Fatigue: OK to Fire Safety-Sensitive Worker for Turning Off Radio and Taking a Nap

A fuel runner working the night shift at Toronto Pearson International Airport left his post without authorization for two hours, turned off his radio rendering himself unreachable, and went into an unauthorized passenger where he was found sleeping in his Air Canada uniform. While acknowledging that discipline was in order, the union claimed that termination was too severe, noting that other employees who got caught sleeping on the job didn't get fired. But the arbitrator wasn't impressed, noting that in none of those past cases did a safety-sensitive employee deliberately turn off their radios. This wasn't just an absenteeism or sleeping on the job situation, it was a serious safety infraction the arbitrator reasoned in finding just cause for termination [[*Air Canada v Iam, District Lodge 140*](#), 2026 CanLII 70772 (CA LA), June 30, 2026].

Action Point: Even if it's legally justified, discipline is hardly the best way to deal with the risks that arise when safety-sensitive workers sleep on the job. Find out how to implement a [Workplace Fatigue Risk Management System](#) for your workers.