

Guide to Child Labour Laws

in Canada

Parents and employers must ensure that the safety and health at work of employed youths are protected.

Where children are employed, employers must make special efforts to ensure that the workplace is healthy and safe.

In Canada, the provinces, the territories and the federal government regulate the employment of children and youths. Generally, children and youths under 18 may work as long as it does not hurt their health, welfare, or safety or interfere with school attendance. Most provinces do not allow children under 14 years of age to work except in special cases.

At what age can I start work in Canada?

It depends on the province where you want to work.

In general, youths may start working in most industries and occupations at the age of 14 in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and Quebec, at age 15 in Alberta and British Columbia, and at age 16 in Manitoba. In Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan, children younger than 14 may work in many jobs without a permit, but there are restrictions.

- For more information on this question and all the questions below, you should call one of the numbers listed at the end of this guide. Each province has its own rules and its own exceptions to the rules.



What do I need to be able to work?

In some provinces, you will need the permission of your parent or guardian to work – sometimes even that of your school principal or the director of employment standards in the province.

Can I work whenever I want?



No. Most provinces restrict the number of hours minors can work. In addition, each province has laws that require minors to be in school at certain times of the day.

Generally, young workers may not work at night or during normal school hours.

Can I work wherever I want?

No. Most provinces prohibit minors from working on a variety of jobs that are dangerous, difficult or likely to have a bad effect on a child's moral development. For example, in New Brunswick, minors under the age of 14 may not work in garages, dancehalls or other places listed in the law. In Nova Scotia, minors under the age of 16 may not work in shooting galleries, pool rooms or other places listed in the law.

There is not room enough in this guide to list all the places where minors may or may not work.

Can I work at night?

Not usually. In most provinces, workers under a certain age may not work after 10 or 11 p.m.



How many hours a day can I work?

In most provinces, minors may not work more than two or three hours a day on a school day, or more than eight hours on a non-school day.

Can I work on a farm in Canada?

Yes. Minors may work on farms in Canada.

Do child labour laws apply to farm work in the same way as to other jobs?

In some provinces, child labour laws do not apply, or only partly apply, to farm work. What follows is a summary of the basic child labour laws for farm work in each Canadian province. Employers everywhere in the country have a duty of care and must ensure that the health and safety of young workers are protected.

Province

Restriction

Alberta

Generally, restrictions on child employment do not apply to most farm and ranch employees.

Children under 16 must attend school during normal school hours, unless they have a special permit.

British Columbia

Workers must be 15 years old or hold a permit from the Employment Standards Branch to work in any sector, including farm work.

Manitoba

Most restrictions on child employment do not apply in the agricultural sector. However, children under 16 cannot work during school hours without a permit. Children under 15 may not get such a permit.

New Brunswick

Youths under 18 may not work during school hours unless they have graduated from high school.

Youths under 16 cannot work on a farm or in other sectors:

- more than 6 hours/day;
- more than 3 hours/school day;
- on any school day when work and school add up to more than 8 hours;
- between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Youths under 14 cannot be employed in the forestry industry, including tree-planting, brushing and spraying, without a permit from the Director of Employment Standards.

Province	Restriction	Province	Restriction
Newfoundland and Labrador	<p>Youths under 16 cannot work on a farm or in other sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the employer has not received the written consent of a parent or guardian; • if the work will impair school attendance or the capacity to benefit from school; • if the work is harmful to the youth's health or normal development; • more than 8 hours per day • more than 3 hours on a school day without a permit; • if time spent at school and at work adds up to more than 8 hours in a day; • between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.; • in circumstances where the child does not get a rest period of 12 consecutive hours/day; • during a strike/lockout. <p>Youths under 14 may not be employed.</p>		<p>Youths under 14 cannot work on a farm or in other sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the work is harmful to the youth's health or normal development; • if the work will impair school attendance or the capacity to benefit from school; • for more than 8 hours per day; • for more than 3 hours on a school day without a permit; • if time spent at school and at work adds up to more than 8 hours in a day; • between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.
		Ontario	<p>Most restrictions on children's work do not apply in the farm sector. Youth under 16 must go to school and cannot work during school hours without a permit, unless they have completed high school.</p>
Nova Scotia	<p>Youths under 16 cannot work in the forestry sector, including treeplanting, brushing and spraying, unless they are employed by a family member.</p> <p>Youths under 16 must attend school and cannot work during school hours.</p>	P.E.I.	<p>Youths under 16 cannot work on a farm or in other sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the work is harmful to the youth's health or normal development; • for more than 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week; • during normal school hours; • for more than 3 hours on a school day, without a permit; • between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. <p>Except for the prohibition concerning harmful work, these rules do not apply in a business or on a farm where only the employer's family works. If certain conditions are met (e.g., parental consent), an inspector of labour standards may also exempt a young person from these limitations.</p>

Province

Restriction

When employing youth workers, employers must:

- identify potential dangers;
- give proper instructions;
- supervise the youth's work or ensure that a qualified adult supervises;
- provide adequate training.

Quebec

Youths under 18 cannot be employed on a farm or in other sectors when:

- the work is likely to be harmful to the youth's health, education or normal development;
- the work is disproportionate to the child or youth's abilities .

If a child or youth is subject to compulsory school attendance, he or she cannot be employed:

- during school hours or during hours that make attendance at school; difficult or impossible;
- between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.

At the request of his or her parents, a student may be excused from attending school for up to six weeks during the school year to carry out urgent work.

Youths under 14 cannot be employed unless an employer receives written consent from the child's parent or tutor.



Province

Restriction

Saskatchewan Youth workers must be 16 years old to operate powered mobile equipment on a worksite or to work in areas where they may be exposed to dangerous chemicals or biological substances.

Youths under 16 cannot work during school hours without the permission of their school's principal.

Harmful child labour is everybody's business

Provincial officials who enforce labour, health and safety standards will accept good faith complaints about harmful child and youth labour from any person.

Provincial contact information

Alberta

For information about youth employment, to apply for a permit, or to make a complaint, contact the Human Resources and Employment Office nearest you, or dial: (780) 427-3731 in Edmonton or toll free (province-wide) 310-0000 (780) 427-3731.

If you believe that a child is working in dangerous conditions, or if you would like information about worker health and safety, contact Workplace Health and Safety:

- 1-866-415-8690 (province-wide toll free number).

British Columbia

For information about youth employment, to apply for a permit, or to make a complaint, contact the Employment Standards Branch nearest you, or dial:

- 1-800-663-3316 (province-wide toll free number).

For information about worker health and safety contact the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia:

- 1-888-621-SAFE (1-888-621-7233, province-wide toll free number).

Manitoba

For information about youth employment, to apply for a permit, or to make a complaint, contact the Labour and Immigration Employment Standards Office nearest you, or dial: (204) 945-3352 in Winnipeg or toll free 1-800-821-4307.

If you believe that a child is working in dangerous conditions, or if you would like information about worker health and safety, contact the Workplace Health and Safety Division:

- 1-800-282-8069 (province-wide toll free number).

New Brunswick

For information about youth employment, or to make a complaint, contact the Employment Standards Branch nearest you, or call:

- 1-888-4-LABOUR (1-888-452-2687, province-wide toll free number).

Newfoundland and Labrador

For information about youth employment or to make a complaint, contact the Labour Standards Division:

- 1-877-563-1063 (province-wide toll free number).

Nova Scotia

For information about youth employment or to make a complaint, contact the Labour Standards Division:

- 1-888-315-0110 (province-wide toll free number).

Ontario

If you believe that a child is working in dangerous conditions, or if you would like information about worker health and safety, contact the Occupational Health and Safety Branch:

- 1-800-268-8013 (province-wide toll free number).

Prince Edward Island

For information about youth employment, or to make a complaint, contact the Labour and Industrial Relations Division:

- 1-800-333-4362 (province-wide toll free number).

If you believe that a child is working in dangerous conditions, or if you would like information about worker health and safety, contact the Occupational Health and Safety Branch:

- 1-800-237-5049 (province-wide toll free number).

Quebec

For information about labour standards, or to make a complaint, contact the Commission des normes du travail:

- 1-888-708-9188 (province-wide toll free number).

If you believe that a child is working in dangerous conditions, or if you would like information about worker health and safety, contact Quebec's workplace safety commission, the CSST (Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail):

- 1-800-667-7585 (province-wide toll free number).

Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Labour Farm Safety Program promotes safe farm practices and offers advice on the employment of youth and children in the agricultural sector:

- 1-877-419-3510 (province-wide toll free number).

If you believe that a child is working in dangerous conditions, or if you would like information about worker health and safety, contact the Occupational Health and Safety Division:

- 1-800-567-7233 (province-wide toll free number);
- 1-800-667-5023 (in Saskatoon).



Commission for Labor Cooperation