

Lawyers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



Contents

1. Working as a Lawyer [NOC 41101].....	2
2. Skills, Education and Experience	7
3. Finding Jobs.....	9
4. Applying for a Job	11
5. Getting Help from Industry Sources.....	12

1. Working as a Lawyer [NOC 2021: 41101/ NOC 2016: 4112]

Job Description

Lawyers advise clients on legal matters, draft legal documents and represent clients before courts, tribunals and administrative bodies.

As a lawyer, you perform the following duties:

- Offer legal advice to clients
- research legal precedents and gather evidence
- argue clients' cases before courts of law, tribunals and administrative bodies
- draft legal documents such as real estate transactions, wills, divorces and contracts and prepare statements of legal opinions
- negotiate business transactions and settlements of civil disputes
- can also act as mediators, conciliators or arbitrators.
- do management tasks related to the practice of law
- may act as executor, trustee or guardian in estate and family law matters

Source:

WorkBC Career Profile for Lawyers

<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>

Industry Overview

Over 11,000 lawyers practise law in British Columbia. Lawyers are qualified to act as both barristers and solicitors, although many lawyers choose to limit their practices to one of these professional roles.

Barristers are lawyers who advise clients on matters intended for a hearing in court or at an administrative tribunal such as the Labour Relations Board or the Human Rights Tribunal. **Solicitors** prepare contracts and other legal documents such as real estate transfers, wills, share transfers or corporate agreements. The demand for legal services is affected by the economy, societal trends and changes to legislation and can fluctuate dramatically. A growing economy, for example, might lead to an increase in business deals not seen during a recession.

Two-thirds of BC's lawyers work in the Metro Vancouver area. Another 14 per cent are on Vancouver Island (concentrated primarily in Victoria). The remainder practise in communities across the province.

There is a need for lawyers with a specialization in areas such as:

- Aboriginal rights
- international law
- intellectual property, patents and trademarks
- environmental law
- Internet law
- entertainment law
- immigration law
- construction law
- mediation

Sources:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Lawyers**
<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>

Lawyers A guide for newcomers to British Columbia

- Law Society of British Columbia
<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/Website/media/Shared/docs/becoming/career-in-law.pdf>

Job Outlook in BC

Lawyers



Source: WorkBC Career Profile for Lawyers

<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>

WorkBC provides job openings in BC regions from 2021-2031:

Region	Expected # of Job Openings 2021-2031	Average Annual Employment Growth % 2021-2031
Vancouver Island	690	0.4%
Lower Mainland / Southwest	3740	1.4%
Thompson-Okanagan	340	0.5%
Cariboo	50	-0.2%
North Coast & Nechako	40	0.3%
Northeast	20	1.3%

You can learn more about working as a lawyer in BC from:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Lawyers**
<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>
- **Considering a Career in Law?, Law Society of British Columbia**
<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/Website/media/Shared/docs/becoming/career-in-law.pdf>

Types of Employers

Lawyers work in many settings including:

- law firms
- prosecutor's offices
- federal, provincial and municipal government departments
- various business establishments / corporations

You may also be self-employed.

Salary

In BC, the median annual salary for lawyers is \$115,621 a year.

Lawyers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia

You are typically paid a salary if you work for government agencies or large companies. If you work for law firms you are usually paid according to the number of hours you work. Partners at law firms usually get a percentage of the firm's profits as well.

Job Bank Canada provides annual wages for lawyers in BC regions:

Community/Area	Salary (\$/year)		
	Low	Median	High
British Columbia	37,400	115,621	242,117
Cariboo Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kootenay Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	37,834	119,309	272,432
Nechako Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Coast Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
Northeast Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
Thompson–Okanagan Region	32,011	102,218	181,573
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	45,028	106,857	183,416
Canada	37,347	116,940	294,346

Source: Job Bank, Wage Report

<https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/wages-occupation/15815/BC>

Sources:

- Career Cruising [profile for Lawyers]
<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>
Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library
- WorkBC Career Profile for Lawyers
<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>

Working Hours

As a lawyer you often work long hours, typically between 8 and 11 hours a day. During trials or big negotiations, this can stretch to 15 or 16 hours a day. Weekend work is also common.

You may have more regular hours if you work for government agencies or businesses.

2. Skills, Education and Experience

Skills

- excellent verbal and written communication skills
- ability to demonstrate logical thinking, with enjoyment of arguments and complex ideas
- strong negotiation skills
- interest in researching legal precedents and gathering evidence
- excellent ability to work well under pressure
- excellent attention to detail
- analytical
- excellent people skills
- ability to demonstrate and maintain high ethical standards

Education and Experience

To practice law in British Columbia you must:

- Complete a law degree from a recognized institution, which is generally three years of graduate study
- Complete the Law Society of British Columbia's admission program
- Be registered as a member of the Law Society of British Columbia

Qualifications

This occupation is regulated in British Columbia.

In order to practice law in British Columbia you must be a member of the Law Society of British Columbia. You must complete the bar courses, provincial law society exams, and carry out a period of articling.

Lawyers *A guide for newcomers to British Columbia*

All applicants to the Law Society are required to complete the Law Society Admission Program, which includes a 10 week Professional Legal Training Course, two qualification examinations, and nine months of articles.

The Law Society must also be satisfied that you are of good character before being permitted to practise law.

For further information on licensing and membership see:

- **Law Society of British Columbia**

<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/becoming-a-lawyer-in-bc/>

<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/becoming-a-lawyer-in-bc/what-you-need-to-know-if-you-plan-to-practise-in-b/>

Internationally trained and accredited Lawyers

A lawyer who has obtained a law degree in a country other than Canada or a law degree in the Civil Code may be called to the Bar in BC, but must first obtain a Canadian LLB degree **or** a *Certificate of Qualification* issued by the National Committee on Accreditation.

With either of these qualifications, you may then apply to enrol in the Law Society Admission Program (LSAP).

To apply for a *Certificate of Qualification*, contact the National Committee on Accreditation. Upon review of your completed application, the NCA will advise you whether you must complete further study at a Canadian law school or pass certain examinations set by the NCA. It is your responsibility to arrange for completion of the NCA's requirements.

For more information:

- **National Committee on Accreditation (NCA)**

<https://nca.legal/>

- **Law Society of British Columbia. Transfers from Another Country**

<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/becoming-a-lawyer-in-bc/transfers/>
<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/becoming-a-lawyer-in-bc/transfers/transfer-to-bc-from-outside-canada/>

3. Finding Jobs

You'll find job advertisements in local newspapers, trade journals, and electronic sources, as well as through professional associations' publications.

Local Newspapers

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* & *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily and the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and in *The Province* on Sundays.

Online Job Postings

- **LegalJobs.ca**
<https://www.legaljobs.ca/>
- **Indeed.com**
http://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search
Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards.
- **Neuvoo.ca**
<http://neuvoo.ca>
- **Canadian Lawyer**
<https://www.canadianlawyermag.com/careers>
- **Legal Services Society Careers (LegalAid BC)**
<https://legalaid.bc.ca/careers>
Current vacancies within the Legal Services Society of BC

Professional Associations' Career Resources

- **British Columbia Branch. Canadian Bar Association**
<https://www.cbabc.org/Publications-and-Resources/Job-Board/Postings>

Identifying the Right Position

When you browse job advertisements, you'll find a range of different job titles that are relevant.

For lawyers, look for these related job titles:

- Advocate, Legal
- Attorney
- Crown prosecutor
- Barrister
- Corporate counsel
- Legal advisor
- Legal Aid Lawyer
- Solicitor
- Defence Counsel
- In-house Legal Counsel
- Litigator

Sources:

- WorkBC Career Profile for Lawyers
<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>
- JobBank Canada <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/occupation/15815/BC>

Creating a List of Potential Employers

You can use directories to produce lists of employers in the legal sector in Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Business in Vancouver. "Biggest Law Firms in Vancouver"**
Available at VPL, Central Branch or online at <https://biv.com/lists>
- **British Columbia Legal Telephone Directory**
Available at Central Library 340.05 B86 or online at:
<https://www.cbabc.org/Directory/Home>

- **Canadian Law List**

Available at Central Library, 340 C21 or online at

<http://www.canadianlawlist.com/>

- **Canadian Legal LEXPERT Directory**

<http://www.lexpert.ca/directory/>

- **The Canadian Bar Association British Columbia – Find a Lawyer**

<https://www.cba.org/For-The-Public/Find-A-Lawyer>

- **Martindale-Hubbell**

<http://www.martindale.com/>

- **Reference Canada**

<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>

Click on "Start Search" beside Canadian Businesses, then select the "Advanced Search" button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "Law" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.

Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page

NOTE: You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).

4. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume or curriculum vitae and a cover letter. These should identify the position you are applying for and summarize your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, <http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following pathfinders which are available in print at the Central Library or online at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>
[Search Writing Resumes and Cover Letters]
- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>
[Search Getting Canadian Work Experience]
- **Networking for Employment**
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>
[Search Networking for Employment]
- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>
[Search Learn More About Working in BC and Canada]

5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

Industry Associations

Associations for lawyers in BC and Canada can provide information and assistance. Registration and fees are required for membership.

- **Law Society of British Columbia**
<http://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/>
Provincial regulatory organization for the legal profession in BC
- **Canadian Bar Association, British Columbia Branch**
<https://www.cbabc.org/Home>
- **Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia**
<http://www.cle.bc.ca>
Source of continuing professional education for British Columbia lawyers

Industry Journals

Search the Vancouver Public Library catalogue for journals related to your profession. Examples at the Central Library and online:

- **BarTalk** / Canadian Bar Association BC
<http://www.cbabc.org/BarTalk/home>
- **Canadian Lawyer**
Available at the Central Library, 340.05 C2122
<http://www.canadianlawyermag.com/>

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Library, Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.