

# Legal Administrative Assistants & Paralegals

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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## Legal Administrative Assistants [NOC 2021: 13111/ NOC 2016: 1242] & [NOC 2021: 42200/ NOC 2016: 4211] Paralegals

***Legal Administrative Assistants may also be called:***

- *legal secretary*
- *real estate secretary*
- *litigation secretary*

***Paralegals may also be called:***

- *law clerk*
- *legal researcher*
- *litigation legal assistant*
- *real estate law clerk*

### 1. What Would I Do?

***Legal administrative assistants*** perform secretarial and administrative duties in law offices or offices that work with legal documents (e.g. real estate companies, land title offices, the court system). You handle and format legal correspondence, and review and proofread outgoing documents.

Your duties can include:

- prepare and enter correspondence and legal documents, such as deeds, wills, affidavits and briefs
- review and proofread documents and correspondence to ensure compliance with legal procedures

- schedule appointments, meetings and conferences for employer
- use knowledge of legal records and procedures to set up and maintain filing systems (including confidential materials and documents)
- open and distribute regular and electronic incoming mail and other material and co-ordinate the flow of information internally and with other departments or organizations

**Paralegals:** *prepare legal documents and conduct research to assist lawyers or other professionals.*

*Your duties can include:*

- assist lawyers by
  - interviewing clients, witnesses and other related parties
  - assembling documentary evidence
  - preparing trial briefs
  - arranging for trials
- prepare wills, real estate transactions and other legal documents, court reports and affidavits
- research records, court files and other legal documents
- draft legal correspondence and perform general office and clerical duties

More information:

- **WorkBC Career Profiles: Legal Administrative Assistants & Paralegals**  
<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>
- **Career Cruising database** [profiles for 'Legal Secretary' and 'Paralegal']  
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising/>

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

## 2. Am I Suited For This Job?

***Legal administrative assistants should have:***

- *good understanding of legal terminology, legal processes and common legal documents*
- *strong communication skills*
- *good research skills*

*You should be:*

- *detail oriented*
- *good with people*

***Paralegals should have:***

- *strong research skills*
- *strong written and verbal communication skills*

*You should be:*

- *analytical and logical*
- *persuasive*
- *good with people*

**Legal administrative assistants** and **paralegals** carry out most of their duties in offices, courthouses or law libraries. Sometimes you must travel outside the workplace to do research or perform other duties. Most work full time throughout the year during normal office hours. The work can be demanding and stressful.

Sources:

- **WorkBC Career Profiles**
- **Career Cruising database** [profiles for 'Legal Secretary' and 'Paralegal']

### 3. What Are The Wages And Benefits?

In British Columbia, the annual median salary for **Legal administrative assistants** is \$48,136. In BC's regions, you can expect to make:

Community/Area	Wages (\$/hour)		
	Low	Median	High
<a href="#">British Columbia</a>	18.00	23.59	35.71
<a href="#">Cariboo Region</a>	18.00	23.59	35.71
<a href="#">Kootenay Region</a>	18.00	23.59	35.71
<a href="#">Lower Mainland–Southwest Region</a>	18.00	24.00	38.46
<a href="#">Thompson–Okanagan Region</a>	16.50	23.59	33.00
<a href="#">Vancouver Island and Coast Region</a>	17.00	21.50	29.85

Table from Job Bank Wage Report <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages> [Search Legal Administrative Assistant]

In British Columbia, the annual median salary for **Paralegals** is \$60,170. In BC's regions, you can expect to make:

Community/Area	Wages (\$/hour)		
	Low	Median	High
<a href="#">British Columbia</a>	19.59	30.22	47.00
<a href="#">Lower Mainland–Southwest Region</a>	19.00	32.97	48.08
<a href="#">Thompson–Okanagan Region</a>	19.59	28.57	35.90
<a href="#">Vancouver Island and Coast Region</a>	19.59	30.22	47.00

Table from Job Bank Wage Report <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages> [Search Paralegal]

If you work full-time you usually receive benefits in addition to your salary, such as dental coverage, paid sick leave and vacation time, and pension plan contributions.

Sources: WorkBC Career Profiles & Career Cruising database

## 4. What Is The Job Outlook In BC?

### **Legal administrative assistants:**

Most new job opportunities in the next few years will be to replace retiring workers. While the current supply of new graduates is sufficient, some employers are finding it difficult to find candidates with hands-on practical experience and knowledge in the various areas of legal practice. Legal administrative assistants with training and experience in litigation and conveyance procedures, as well as those with strong computer and communication skills, will be highly sought after.

### **Employment Outlook**

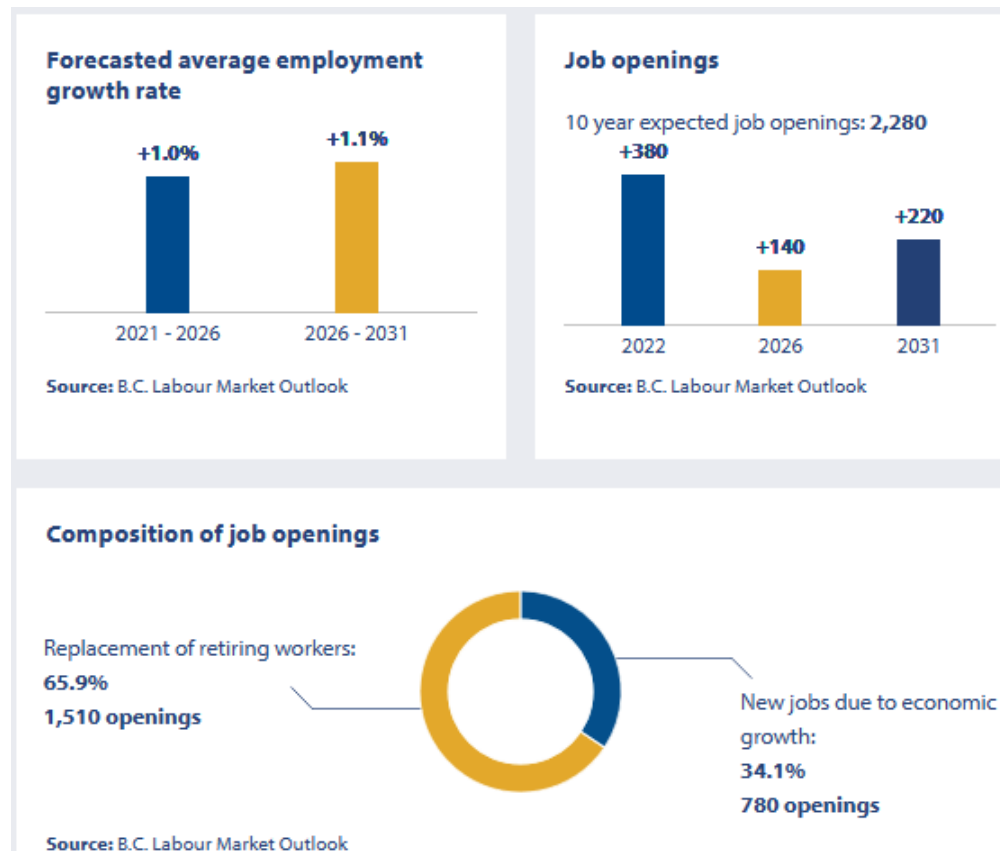


Chart from WorkBC

## Paralegals

Industry sources report that there is currently demand for paralegals in the province. Organizations that hire paralegals and related occupations, such as those offering real estate, financial, insurance and legal services, are expected to expand as the need for their services increases due to provincial population growth. Law firms and other organizations may reduce costs and increase the availability and efficiency of legal services by hiring paralegals.

## Employment Outlook

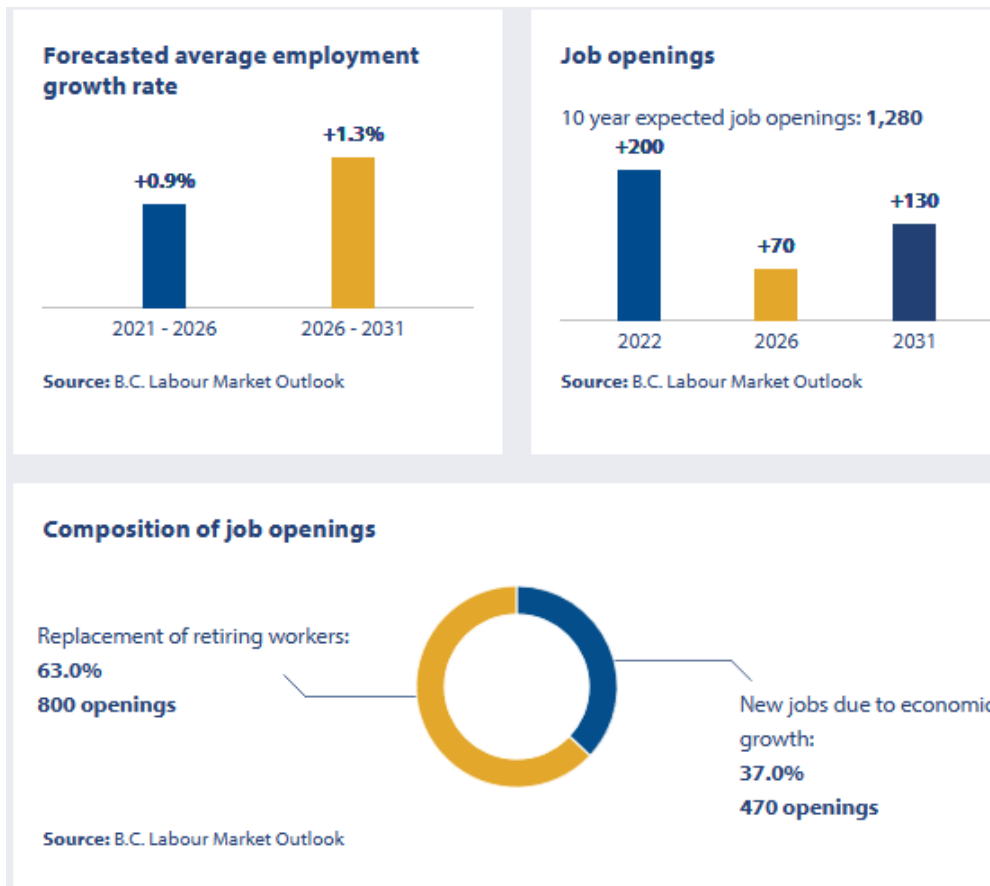


Chart from WorkBC

Source:

- WorkBC Career Profiles

## 5. How do I become a legal administrative assistant / paralegal?

**Legal administrative assistants** do not require certification in BC. However, you are usually required to complete secondary school, as well as a one- or two-year college program or other program for administrative assistants or legal administrative assistants.

**Paralegals** do not require certification in BC. However, you do require a college diploma in a paralegal program (usually lasting two years). Other requirements for paralegals may include: a bachelor's degree and/or in-house training from a law firm or other legal establishment office experience

## 6. How Do I Find A Job?

### ***Where would I work?***

#### ***Legal Administrative Assistants may work in:***

- *law offices, legal departments of large firms, real estate companies, land title offices, municipal, provincial and federal courts and government agencies*

#### ***Paralegals may work in:***

- *law firms, record search companies and in legal departments throughout the public and private sectors*
- *paralegal firms, government agencies, and legal clinics*



## ***Finding Advertised Jobs***

Jobs are advertised in a variety of sources including newspapers, magazines and online job sites.

### ***Local Newspapers***

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

### ***Online Job Postings***

- **BC Legal Management Association (BCLMA)**  
<https://bclma.org/job-bank/> [select category 'Legal Administrative Assistant' or 'Paralegal' or 'Litigation Support']
- **BC Paralegal Association (BCPA)**  
<https://www.bcparalegalassociation.com/cpages/employment-opportunities> [NOTE: BCPA JobBoard accessible to members only]
- **Legal Aid BC**  
<https://legalaid.bc.ca/careers> [non-profit organization that provides legal aid for people with low incomes in BC]
- **Recruiting Agencies**
  - **Arlyn Recruiting**  
<https://arlynrecruiting.com/job-postings/>
  - **Eva Lee & Associates Recruitment**  
<https://www.evalee.ca/> [legal support jobs in Vancouver/Lower Mainland]
  - **R. Johnson Legal Recruitment**  
<https://rjohnsoncorp.com/legal-jobs/>
- **Indeed.com**  
<https://ca.indeed.com/Legal-Assistant-jobs-in-British-Columbia>  
<https://ca.indeed.com/Paralegal-jobs-in-British-Columbia>

## ***Finding "Hidden Jobs"***

Many job vacancies are not advertised. The resources below will help you *with finding jobs in this "hidden" job market.*

## ***Using Directories to Create a List of Potential Employers***

You can use company directories to produce lists of law firms and employers in the legal field. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Canadian Law List**

<https://www.canadianlawlist.com/> [search for law firms by practice area and by city/province]

- **Canadian Legal Lexpert Directory**

<https://www.lexpert.ca/rankings/> [search for law firms by practice area and by city/province]

- **BC Legal Directory**

<https://www.cbabc.org/Directory/Home>

Lists all lawyers in BC, law firms, law courts and law related organizations

- **Reference Canada**

<https://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 "*legal*" or "*law*" and click LOOKUP. 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).*

## **Networking, Volunteering and Temporary Agencies**

Many positions are filled by people who have been recommended by someone they know. Networking, working as a volunteer or registering with a temporary employment agency are good ways of helping you find jobs and meet people in your industry.

### **Networking and the Hidden Job Market:**

*When looking for work, be sure to talk to friends, relatives and neighbours. They may know someone who is hiring! Working as a volunteer, attending events, and joining clubs and associations are good ways to gain "Canadian experience." They are also good ways to meet people to learn about the local job market.*

### **Volunteer opportunities**

- **Volunteer BC**

<https://www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/>

- **GoVolunteer.ca**

<http://govolunteer.ca/> [search 'legal' or 'law']

- **Canadian Universities.net**

[http://www.canadian-universities.net/Volunteer/Justice\\_and\\_Legal-British\\_Columbia-Vancouver.html](http://www.canadian-universities.net/Volunteer/Justice_and_Legal-British_Columbia-Vancouver.html)

Information about Justice and Legal Organizations in Vancouver offering volunteer opportunities

*For additional tips see:*

- **Networking for Employment**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Networking for Employment]

- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Getting Canadian Work Experience]

## 7. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your experience. Use the library catalogue, <http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

*For more information see:*

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Writing Resumes and Cover Letters]

## 8. Where Can This Job Lead?

**Legal administrative assistants:** often start their careers as receptionists in law firms or the legal departments of larger organizations, or as junior legal secretaries. As you gain experience, you may advance to senior legal administrative assistant positions; and with further education, you may progress to other occupations such as paralegal.

**Paralegals:** recent graduates from the paralegal program usually find positions as junior paralegals. With experience you may be promoted to managerial and other law-related positions within a firm.

## 9. Where Can I Find More Information?

- **BC Legal Management Association**

<https://bclma.org/>

- **BC Paralegal Association**

<https://www.bcparalegalassociation.com/cpages/home>

- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Learn More About Working in BC and Canada]

***Questions? Please ask the Information Staff at the Central 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/>.*