The Legislation

The Government of British Columbia has made changes to the Employment Standards Act to better support workers both during the COVID-19 public health emergency, and in the long term.

The changes allow workers to immediately take unpaid, job-protected leave if they are unable to work for reasons relating to COVID-19.

To better support workers now and in the future, the changes also provide up to three days of unpaid, job-protected leave each year for people who can’t work due to illness or injury. This change brings B.C. in line with all other provinces in Canada.

WHAT IS UNPAID, JOB-PROTECTED LEAVE?

This is time off from work, which is unpaid, and during which your job is saved for you. Your employer is not allowed to fire you for taking this leave.

WHO CAN TAKE UNPAID, JOB-PROTECTED COVID-19 LEAVE?

The majority of workers in B.C. can take this leave if they are unable to work for reasons relating to COVID-19. This means workers who are ill, need to self-isolate, or need to care for their child, or whose employer has told them to stay home because of concerns about exposure to others, will be able to take leave without putting their job at risk. Please visit the Employment Standards Branch for more information on qualifying for this leave: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards

HOW LONG CAN I TAKE UNPAID, JOB-PROTECTED COVID-19 LEAVE?

There is no limit on how long people can take the leave. As long as you are unable to work due to one of the reasons above, you will be eligible for this leave.

WHO CAN TAKE UP TO THREE DAYS OF THE NEW ILLNESS AND INJURY LEAVE?

The majority of workers in B.C. can take this leave if they are unable to work because of illness or injury. As long as you’ve worked for your employer for at least 90 days, you can take up to three days off work if you’re sick or recovering from an injury.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY EMPLOYER WON’T LET ME TAKE AN UNPAID, JOB-PROTECTED LEAVE?

It’s your right to take this time off work. If you have concerns about your employer following these new laws, contact the Employment Standards Branch: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards