

# Ask The Expert – Hiring Seasonal Workers



Hiring seasonal workers can help employers manage increased workloads during peak business periods, vacations, or temporary operational demands.

However, employers must still comply with employment standards, workplace safety obligations, and human rights requirements when recruiting and managing temporary or seasonal staff.

## QUESTION

What should employers consider when hiring seasonal workers in Canada?

## ANSWER

When hiring seasonal workers in Canada, employers must ensure they comply with applicable employment standards legislation, workplace health and safety requirements, human rights obligations, and payroll rules. Seasonal employees are generally entitled to many of the same workplace protections as permanent employees, including minimum wage, overtime pay where applicable, vacation pay, statutory holiday entitlements, and safe working conditions. Employers should clearly define the terms of employment at the time of hire, including the expected duration of employment, work schedules, job duties, compensation, and any end-of-season arrangements.

Additional considerations may apply when hiring young workers, temporary foreign workers, or employees in federally regulated industries.

## **EXPLANATION**

Seasonal employment is common in industries such as tourism, landscaping, agriculture, retail, construction, and hospitality. Although seasonal workers may be hired for a limited duration, employers are still responsible for complying with provincial or federal employment standards legislation. This includes maintaining proper payroll records, deducting and remitting statutory withholdings, providing required breaks and rest periods, and ensuring employees receive any legislated vacation pay or public holiday entitlements. Employers should also be cautious about misclassifying seasonal workers as independent contractors when the working relationship meets the legal definition of employment.

Employers also have obligations under occupational health and safety legislation to provide seasonal workers with appropriate training, supervision, and protective equipment. Young or inexperienced workers may require additional orientation and oversight to ensure they understand workplace hazards and safe work procedures. Human rights legislation also applies to seasonal hiring practices, meaning employers cannot discriminate during recruitment, scheduling, or termination based on protected grounds such as age, disability, race, religion, or family status. To reduce potential disputes, employers should use written employment agreements that clearly outline expectations, duration of employment, and any policies relating to layoffs, recalls, or end-of-season terminations.