Month In Review – Québec



LAWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Laws

Oct 6: The Parti Québécois (PQ) won enough seats in the Québec provincial election to form a minority government. This marks the first time the separatist PQ has been in power since 2014. During the campaign, the PQ promised to hold a referendum on separating from the rest of Canada. Polls indicate that only about 30% of Québecers currently back such a move.

Respiratory Protection

Oct 10: The Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) ended public consultations on proposed new OHS respiratory protections for non-infectious bioaerosols, including a ban on the presence of visible mould contamination at various workstations.

Action Point: Find out how to implement a compliant Respiratory Protection Policy at your workplace.

New Laws

Sep 23: Real gross domestic product (GDP)in Québec increased by a modest 0.2% in the second quarter of 2026, as compared to 0.4% in Q1. The improved trade balance and final consumption

expenditure, particularly household spending, were the main drivers of the growth that did occur. Decline in inventory investment was among the factors holding back real GDP growth in Q2.

Infectious Illness

Oct 1: With reported raccoon rabies infection cases continuing to spike, Québec extended the ban on transporting certain live animals within affected municipalities until December 6, 2026. The ban, which covers not only raccoons but also striped skunks, gray and red foxes, coyotes, and hybrids, applies to Cleveland, Saint-Claude, Grand-Saint-Esprit, Nicolet, Saint-Félix-de-Kingsey, Saint-Léonard-d'Aston, Sainte-Clotilde-de-Horton, Sainte-Moniquem, and Sainte-Séraphine.

Action Point: Use the OHS Insider Infection Exposure Control Plan template to prevent COVID, influenza, and other seasonal respiratory illness outbreaks at your workplace.

CASES

Due Diligence: Just Because Work Is Urgent Doesn't Mean OHS Rules Don't Apply

CNESST cited an electrical contractor with an OHS *Construction Safety Code* violation after an inspector observed one of the firm's electricians re-wiring traffic lights on a public road without proper signage. While acknowledging that signs weren't in place, the contractor argued that the site wasn't a construction site, noting that the work was a one-time quick on- and off-job undertaken in response to an urgent situation after a traffic accident had just occurred. The Québec court disagreed and upheld the violation. The urgency of the work didn't change the fact that it was located on a construction site serviced by the contractor. And the contractor didn't

prove that it exercised due diligence in preventing the violation [*CNESST v. 9179-2424 Québec inc*., 2026 QCCQ 4155 (CanLII), August 31, 2026].

Action Point: The takeaway is that compliance shortcuts aren't permissible and that standard OHS requirements continue to apply even in urgent situations. Use the OHSI Due Diligence Scorecard to assess the adequacy of your own OHS program.

Drugs & Alcohol: Arbitrator Upholds HQ's Strict Anti-Drug Policy for Safety-Sensitive Workers

The long-running legal battle over Hydro-Québec's (HQ) policy banning employees from being impaired by alcohol or drugs while at work, on the premises, on HQ property, or while using HQ vehicles continued. At issue in the latest case was the third version of the policy adopted in 2020, which the union contended was discriminatory and invasive of workers' privacy rights and physical integrity, particularly. The Québec arbitrator rendered a mixed decision, upholding the 2020 policy and HQ's right to implement a strict anti-drug and alcohol policy to ensure safety but also finding that the testing provisions, bans on possession, management right to remove a worker suspected of impairment, and requirement that workers disclose their addictions contained in the previous versions of the policy went too far [*Hydro-Québec v. Syndicat des technologues d'Hydro-Québec, section locale 957 scfp, 2026 CanLII 93175* (QC SAT), August 17, 2026].

Action Point: While encouraging employees to voluntarily disclose their drug and alcohol addictions is highly advisable, requiring them to do so is far more problematic. Find out how to implement a Drugs and Alcohol Testing Policy at your workplace.

Workplace Harassment: Rush to Judgment Invalidates Teacher's Sex Abuse Suspension

A youth centre suspended a special education teacher after his manager learned of a report accusing him of sexually abusing a young person living in the facility. In so doing, the centre invoked a multi-sectoral agreement among Québec ministries for dealing with situations where a child may be a victim of sexual abuse. The union accused the centre of violating the agreement's due process requirements. The arbitrator upheld the grievance. Instead of listing specific information about the charges, the suspension letter used vague phrases like "new concerning facts" and "professional failings." The centre also unfairly denied the teacher the opportunity to respond to the charges. **Result:** The suspension was invalid and the teacher was entitled to money damages [*Alliance of Professional and Technical Staff in Health and Social Services c Santé Québec – Integrated University Health and Social Services Centre of Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean*, 2026 CanLII 100050 (QC SAT), September 17, 2026].

Action Point: To the uninitiated, an accusation of child sex abuse would obviously constitute just cause to suspend a teacher who works in close contact with kids. The takeaway is that accused workers are entitled to due process and that a mere accusation, no matter how disturbing, isn't an excuse to rush to judgment. Find out how to implement an effective Workplace Violence and Harassment Compliance Game Plan at your site that provides for prompt, fair, and thorough investigation of harassment complaints.

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