

Counting Constraints: A Comprehensive Count of Canada's Regulatory Requirements (2025 Edition)

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To quantify the regulatory burden across Canada, CFIB has estimated the number of regulatory requirements (or restrictions) within each jurisdiction's legislation and regulations—two primary sources of rules affecting businesses and citizens. **Legislation (or statutes)** are laws passed by each jurisdiction's legislative body, setting a broad legal framework for specific purposes, such as tax collection or worker certification. **Regulations** are specific rules tied to certain statutes and are enacted by government officials rather than the legislature. They provide a more detailed framework for how statutes are enforced or implemented. Jurisdictions that produce their own regulatory count typically use different methods, making comparisons difficult, underscoring the need for a consistent approach.

Defining regulatory requirements

A regulatory requirement refers to a rule that prevents, limits, or deters certain actions or behaviours by businesses or individuals through additional costs, hurdles, or outright prohibition. It can also mandate actions, such as filling out forms or paying fees, that individuals or businesses might not otherwise choose.

Methodology

To estimate the number of regulatory requirements across Canada, CFIB counted instances of key terms indicative of behaviour-altering provisions within available public statutes and regulations in each province and within the federal government.¹ These key terms—"shall," "must," "may not," "required," and "prohibited"—include those that have been used by the governments of Ontario and

¹ *This regulatory count analyzes the lists of public acts across jurisdictions, focusing on public bills that address community-wide policies, as distinct from private bills that apply to specific individuals or entities.*

British Columbia for their own regulatory counts.^{2,3} Counting these key terms was not always possible in Quebec given that a substantial portion of the province's regulations are only available in French. To account for this, the French words “doit,” “ne pourrait pas”/”ne peut pas,” “requis” (including “requis” and “requis”), and “interdit” (including “interdite” and “interdites”) were counted in those documents instead.

The process of identifying these key terms involved reviewing PDF versions of each jurisdiction's legislative and regulatory documents. The number of instances in which the key terms appear was counted to develop a total.

Limitations

This approach has limitations, as the presence of these terms does not always indicate a regulatory requirement. Conversely, a single instance may represent multiple requirements. Additionally, some requirements may be embodied using words this method does not capture. Requirements not considered in this count include those in government policies and forms. Further, regulatory counts do not perfectly reflect the overall regulatory burden, as requirements can be different in scope and impact. Nevertheless, this count serves as the only comprehensive and standardized measure of Canada's regulatory burden.

Findings: Total regulatory requirements in 2025

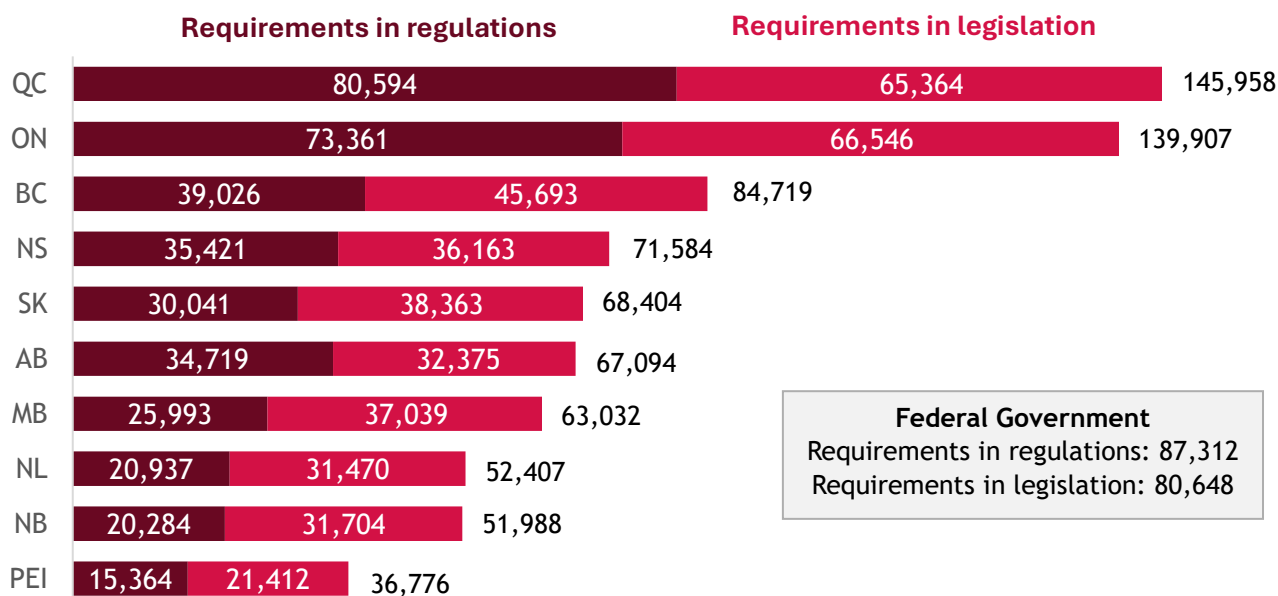
The 2025 data reveal a significant variation in regulatory requirements across jurisdictions, ranging from nearly 37,000 in Prince Edward Island to over 145,000 in Quebec (Figure 1). Generally, larger provinces tend to have a higher total count, driven by their larger economies and wider range of industries, which can require more complex regulations to manage. Nonetheless, Alberta has a smaller regulatory count than Nova Scotia or Saskatchewan, despite having a larger population.⁴ Additionally, despite having just over half of Ontario's population, Quebec has the highest number of requirements of any province, suggesting population is not the sole determinant of the number of requirements. Smaller provinces like Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick generate most of their regulatory requirements through legislation, while larger provinces like Quebec and Ontario produce more through regulation. A federal regulatory count was also conducted. However, comparisons between the federal count and provincial counts are challenging due to fundamental differences in national versus provincial governance structures.

² Government of Ontario. 2024 Burden Reduction Report: Enhancing Ontario's communities - Pathways to efficiency and connection, [Link](#).

³ Government of British Columbia. How We Count Guide, [Link](#).

⁴ Statistics Canada. Population estimates, quarterly, [Link](#).

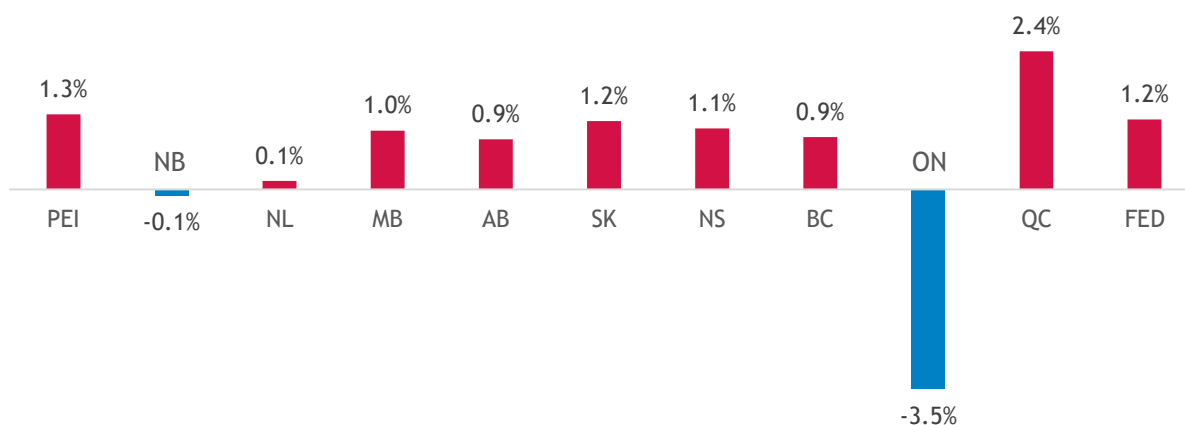
Figure 1: Total 2025 regulatory requirements in Canada



Change in regulatory requirements since 2024

The second iteration of CFIB’s regulatory count, using the same methodology as last year, shows how regulatory requirements have changed over the past year. Overall, changes in regulatory counts were modest, typically under 2%. The number of federal requirements increased by 1.2%, while Ontario saw the largest decline at 3.5%, resulting in Quebec now having the highest regulatory count among provinces.

Figure 2: Year-over-year percentage change in regulatory requirements, 2024-2025



Sources for regulatory requirements

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