

Stuck at the border

How paperwork hinders labour mobility for small businesses

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State of labour mobility in Canada

In 2024, a survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) found that small businesses overwhelmingly support removing internal trade barriers, with 88% urging Canadian governments to prioritize removing as many barriers as possible to the free movement of **goods, services, and workers** between provinces and territories.¹

For years, these calls went largely unanswered. However, the U.S. administration's recent move to impose tariffs on Canadian goods—citing concerns over fentanyl—has reignited urgency among Canadian governments to strengthen domestic free trade.² With our closest international trading relationship becoming more uncertain, it is more important now than ever to ensure businesses can operate freely within Canada's borders.

Estimates suggest that internal trade barriers between Canadian provinces constitute an average effective tariff rate of 21%.³ In response, governments have shown unprecedented momentum toward reducing regulatory inconsistencies. While some encouraging progress has been made, one of the most significant challenges to economic integration has seen minimal progress compared to other areas: the regulatory complexities of moving workers from one jurisdiction to another.

Figure 1

NEARLY HALF OF BUSINESSES HAVE EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES HIRING WORKERS FROM, OR HAVING EMPLOYEES WORKING IN, OTHER JURISDICTIONS



Source: CFIB, April 2025 Your Voice Survey, April 10-24, 2025, based on 207 responses. Final results.

While Canadians may picture interjurisdictional moves as long-distance relocations, the reality is that many are much more localized. In communities such as Ottawa-Gatineau or Lloydminster—where provincial borders cut across city lines—workers frequently commute between provinces. Despite the short distance, differing provincial rules on workers' compensation, safety certifications, or registration requirements can create frustrating and burdensome barriers. Or, for instance, businesses in Thunder Bay, Ontario that are much closer to Winnipeg, Manitoba (8-hour drive) than to Toronto, Ontario (15-hour drive), may have to send their workers to be trained in Toronto as they are under Ontario jurisdiction and Manitoba's standards are not deemed 'suitable' for Ontario. These issues can prevent workers and from taking jobs, and businesses from expanding into new markets.

This report explores how regulatory inconsistencies between Canada's provinces and territories continue to hinder labour mobility. As labour struggles to flow to where it is most needed, regional shortages persist and businesses struggle to fill roles. This contributes to higher prices, fewer job opportunities, and lower production of the goods and services Canadians buy, ultimately dampening the economy. Regional agreements such as the New West Partnership Trade Agreement and Atlantic Trade and Procurement Agreement have already made some progress in this area, but more work remains to be done. The following sections aim to highlight the problem in several main areas and outline practical steps governments can take to unlock the full potential of Canada's workforce.

Labour mobility under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement

The Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), which came into force in 2017, is a broad intergovernmental trade agreement aimed at reducing and eliminating barriers to the free movement of goods, services, investments, and labour within Canada.⁴

As part of this effort, the agreement includes provisions that support labour mobility by allowing individuals certified or licensed to practice a regulated occupation in one province or territory to practice the same occupation in another. This principle of automatic recognition is designed to reduce unnecessary barriers to labour mobility by ensuring that workers are not required to undergo significant additional training, examinations, or assessments, unless a formal exception has been posted under the agreement. In theory, this framework is intended to promote a more integrated labour market across Canada by enabling qualified professionals to move and work more easily across jurisdictions.⁵

However, in practice, regulatory inconsistencies and strict approaches have undermined this promise, posing barriers that limit labour mobility across the country. For instance, the CFTA allows jurisdictions to impose exceptions for certain occupations. While professionals are not prohibited from working in a jurisdiction that has exceptions, additional training or assessments will often be required. Regulatory bodies and regulations also present challenges as requirements differ from one jurisdiction to the next.

In practice: Professional recognition challenges persist

Provincial licensing & professional certification

Despite the intent of the CFTA, labour mobility is still hampered by a patchwork of jurisdictional licensing and certification requirements. In Canada, regulated professions require provincial or territorial (jurisdictional) certification or licensing. Typically, a jurisdictional licence grants legal permission to practice and offer specific services within a province or territory. In contrast, a professional certification reflects a certain level of competency or expertise that may be required for specific jobs but does not necessarily grant the right to practice.⁶ When these licensing and certification requirements differ, it can create confusion and operational barriers for businesses trying to hire or move workers across provincial lines.

As a result, 43% of small businesses across Canada report facing challenges in acquiring provincial licensing, and 44% struggle with the lack of recognition of certifications when hiring workers from or assigning employees to work in another jurisdiction.⁷

Licensing

Holding a licence in one province or territory does not automatically guarantee the right to work in another. While professionals are not explicitly barred from practicing across jurisdictions, they must register with the appropriate regulatory college or association before legally beginning work. This means that a nurse registered to practice in Ontario must still register with Quebec's college in order to start work in Quebec.

As outlined under the CFTA, exceptions may apply when factors such as scope of practice, culture, or language are deemed significantly different and potentially pose a risk to public safety. Occupations

listed as exceptions cannot be practiced in the receiving jurisdiction unless all additional requirements have been met.⁸

Currently, Alberta has the highest number of labour mobility exceptions in the country, listing nine occupations. These include dental hygienists (anaesthetic, prescribing), licensed practical nurses, medical radiation technologists, nurse practitioners, paramedics, podiatrists, safety code officers, and water well drillers. For example, podiatrists from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Northwest Territories must complete additional training before they can register and fully practice in Alberta. In contrast, jurisdictions such as British Columbia, Manitoba, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories have one exception (while Nunavut has zero).

While it is reasonable and generally understood that each province and territory regulate specific occupations to protect public health and safety, a more pragmatic and enabling approach is necessary—especially amid growing labour shortages in vital sectors such as health care.ⁱ Governments should allow regulated professionals to work within the scope of their existing training and experience while they undergo the necessary registration processes in their new province or territory. For example, Saskatchewan and Alberta apply this model for certain exceptions, such as dental hygienists, allowing them to continue working (with limits) during their transition.

Additionally, professional colleges and associations must do their part and be active partners to improve labour mobility across Canada. As gatekeepers of entry into many occupations, these bodies are critical in reducing interjurisdictional barriers. One major area for improvement is the implementation and enforcement of clear service standards for processing applications from out-of-province workers. These standards increase transparency, providing both workers and employers with certainty to plan accordingly. For example, Nova Scotia requires regulatory bodies to issue licences or certifications within 10 business days—an approach that increases predictability and reduces delays.⁹ Alternatively, Ontario’s “As of Right” rules permit certain Canadian-credentialed health care professionals to begin practising immediately in the province for up to six months while their application is completed and approved.¹⁰ The province is expanding these rules to more health care and other professions.¹¹ In contrast, BC has no legislated timeframe for professional certification approval. This results in lengthy processing times for professions, such as chartered professional accountants, that range from four to eight weeks, a delay that can set plans back or deter professionals from accepting temporary work in the province.¹²

Where service standards do not exist, governments should establish them. Where service standards already exist, it is equally important to review these standards and streamline them when possible, a measure supported by 68% of small businesses.¹³ Jurisdictions such as BC should follow the example of more efficient jurisdictions to improve turnaround times and support greater labour mobility. In addition to having clear service standards, jurisdictions should report them publicly to enhance transparency and provide businesses and individuals with more certainty as to when someone from another jurisdiction may be able to start work.

Certification

When it comes to professional certifications, regulatory inconsistencies continue to pose a significant barrier to labour mobility. For instance, the Red Seal endorsement is intended to facilitate

ⁱ Podiatrists in Alberta diagnose, order, and interpret diagnostic tests such as blood tests, culture and sensitivity of infections, and diagnostic radiology (X-rays, CT and MRI scans, bone scans, ultrasound). They also prescribe medications relevant to the treatment of the foot, and perform a full range of other treatment modalities including surgery on the foot and osseous structures. This scope of practice is broader than the scope of practice in many other regulated Canadian jurisdictions.

interprovincial mobility for trades such as hairstyling. However, a Red Seal-certified stylist from Newfoundland and Labrador cannot legally use the titles “hairstylist” or “hairedresser” in New Brunswick unless they obtain a separate licence from the Cosmetology Association of New Brunswick.¹⁴

Restrictions based on such regulatory differences are unreasonable, as they are not based on differences in skills, training, or scope of practice. Moreover, this places an unfair burden in the form of added costs, wait times, and paperwork on professionals simply seeking to expand their business or work across provincial lines. For example, a Red Seal-certified hairstylist from Newfoundland and Labrador who wants to work in New Brunswick must fill out an out-of-province application, provide supporting documents, and pay a fee of \$340. The whole process could take up to 30 days (not accounting for the time it takes for extra training, exams, etc.).¹⁵

These mobility restrictions have real consequences for the public. Not only do they limit employment opportunities for individuals, but they also constrain economic growth. In sectors experiencing critical labour shortages—such as health care, construction, and transportation—these barriers delay the filling of essential positions and reduce overall productivity. Enabling professionals to work more freely across jurisdictions could help alleviate these shortages and improve access to vital services, particularly for rural or underserved areas where access to skilled labour is already limited. Allowing certified professionals to work sooner, even with limitations, would enhance service delivery, reduce wait times, and help build a more responsive and competitive workforce.

Recommendations

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments should:

- Pursue mutual recognition agreements to streamline certification processes and improve labour mobility across Canada.
- Allow licensed professionals to work within the scope of their existing training and experience while undergoing registration processes in a new province or territory.
- Work with professional colleges and associations to lower or waive interprovincial registration fees.
- Streamline the registration process by legislating a clear timeline for professional certification approvals. Should approval timelines not be respected, implement compensation for businesses such as waiving registration fees.

Labour mobility challenges faced by businesses

Workers’ compensation systems

Workers’ compensation systems are employer-funded insurance systems for workers and employers in case of work-related injuries or disabilities. In Canada, each province and territory (except Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, which share a single program) administers its own program, sometimes under different names. For example, while the system is referred to as Workers’ Compensation Board (WCB) in most jurisdictions, Ontario’s system is called the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and Quebec’s is the Commission des normes, de l’équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST).

Employers fund the system through premiums, which are based on jurisdiction-specific assessment rates per \$100 of payroll (see Appendix - Table 1 for a breakdown of average assessment rates by

jurisdiction). These rates vary across provinces and territories, adding complexity for businesses operating in multiple jurisdictions. In addition to jurisdictional differences, assessment rates also vary by industry. This industry-level variation reflects differences in work, associated risks, and claims history, further complicating cost comparisons for employers, particularly those with operations spanning multiple sectors and regions.

Interjurisdictional Agreement (IJA)

Recognizing these challenges, all provincial and territorial Workers' Compensation Boards have signed the Interjurisdictional Agreement (IJA). This agreement aims to simplify workers' compensation coverage for employers and employees operating across multiple jurisdictions by ensuring that:

- Employers do not have to pay workers' compensation premiums twice for the same payroll.
- Interjurisdictional trucking and transport firms avoid multiple assessments.ⁱⁱ
- Injured workers can access services in their home province or territory, even if the injury occurred elsewhere.¹⁶

Persistent challenges with cross-jurisdiction registration

While the IJA reduces duplication of payments and access barriers, it continues to fall short of addressing the key issue: each province and territory maintains its own WCB registration rules, coverage requirements, and administrative processes which businesses must register for and adhere to.

Although jurisdictions may offer temporary coverage for workers going out-of-province to work, employers are still required to register with, and apply for, coverage in the receiving jurisdiction. This requirement has caused difficulties for over a third (35%) of small businesses operating across provincial/territorial borders.¹⁷

Examples of jurisdiction-specific registration requirements

- **Ontario:** WSIB automatically provides coverage for Ontario-based workers temporarily working outside the province for up to six months. However, if the receiving jurisdiction (examples shown below) requires separate registration, employers must comply.
- **British Columbia:** requires out-of-province businesses to register if their workers are in the province for 15 or more days per year, or 10 or more days across three or more visits annually.¹⁸ Applications must be submitted 30 days in advance of starting the business or hiring a worker, and processing can take approximately 10 business days.¹⁹
- **Prince Edward Island:** requires out-of-province employers to register if they employ non-PEI residents to work in PEI for a total of 10 or more days in a calendar year. Registration must occur at the start of operations and be renewed annually by February 28. Employers must report both actual payroll for the previous year and an estimate for the current year. If the actual payroll exceeds the estimate by more than 25%, an underestimating penalty will apply.²⁰

Exemptions vary by jurisdiction

Adding further to the complexity is that all jurisdictions differ significantly on which industries and

ⁱⁱ Note: For the trucking and transport industry, business owners can choose to apply for participation in the Alternative Assessment Procedure (AAP). The AAP allows you to pay assessments only to the Workers' Compensation Boards in jurisdictions where you have workers residing (an application should be made for each jurisdiction your workers reside in.) These boards, in turn, will notify other jurisdictions that your workers travel through your AAP status.

worker categories are exempt from mandatory WCB coverage. Some jurisdictions, such as Nova Scotia, are more general in their approach with the only exceptions being non-mandatory industry businesses that employ fewer than three employees for less than five days in a calendar year.²¹ Other jurisdictions, such as PEI, have a very specific and lengthy list of exceptions including, artists, entertainers or performers, circus operations, travelling and trade shows, clergy, carriers employed in delivering newspapers or other publications, salespersons who are not restricted to selling foods for one manufacturer or supplier, sports professionals, players, and volunteer workers, among others.²²

This fragmented system creates significant red tape for small businesses looking to expand across provincial borders, adding unnecessary complexity, delays, and costs.

“We are a small business with two aging brothers as owners, who put in 12-to-16-hour days, seven days a week. We have tried to expand across Canada, but the WCB and tax issues across the country are a nightmare.”

Construction business owner, Ontario

“We provide services to businesses helping them navigate and report to various WCB agencies. The system is complicated and extremely time consuming.”

Financial services business owner, Alberta

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

The purpose of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is to ensure businesses provide a safe and healthy work environment, minimizing the risk of injuries, illnesses, and other harms on the job. While the intent of OHS is consistent across Canada, the specific safety rules, standards, and enforcement mechanisms vary between jurisdictions, even within a single industry.

Each provincial and territorial authority is responsible for setting and enforcing its own OHS standards, covering everything from on-site resources such as first aid kits and protective equipment to mandatory procedures and safety protocols. For a small business owner operating across different jurisdictions with limited resources, navigating these different rules and regulations can be confusing, time-consuming, and costly. In fact, about 2 in 5 (38%) small businesses across Canada cite this as a challenge when operating interjurisdictionally.²³ Without a dedicated compliance team or spending hours researching, many entrepreneurs risk incurring fines or legal issues for unintentional non-compliance.

The Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table (RCT), established under the CFTA, was created to reduce regulatory complications and inconsistencies across jurisdictions. While progress has been made on harmonizing standards for basic equipment — head protection, hearing protection, and first aid kits — the process is incredibly time-consuming and many inconsistencies remain unresolved across Canada, particularly in areas such as training, certification, and procedures. Since its creation in 2018, 38 regulatory reconciliation items have been added to the work plan, and as of March 2025, only 9 items have been fully implemented by all jurisdictions.²⁴ In other words, in seven years, the RCT has fully completed less than a quarter (24%) of its reconciliation items, underscoring the need for a faster approach.²⁵

A prime example illustrating how ridiculously long these negotiations take are standards for high-visibility safety apparel (HVSA), worn by workers on the job to make them more visible. At the federal level, HVSA must comply with CSA-Z96-15 standards, which set out specifications such as fluorescent background materials, retroreflective tape placement, and minimum visibility levels for garments.²⁶ However, provincial and territorial governments retain authority to implement additional or differing requirements such as whether CSA-Z96 compliance is legally required, the number and placement of stripes on the HVSA, and mandatory HVSA classes for specific occupations.²⁷ As a result, a business operating in multiple jurisdictions may be forced to purchase entirely new sets of HVSA in order to satisfy regional rules, creating unnecessary costs and discouraging small business expansion. Recognizing this, the RCT included this as one of the items to harmonize across the country. However, their deadline to conclude negotiation for this one item is slated for December 31, 2026 (initially added January 2025), and this does not even account for how long it will take for jurisdictions to implement what has been agreed upon.²⁸

Inconsistent workers' compensation board and OHS systems force businesses to undertake processes multiple times, hindering small business growth and interprovincial mobility. While coordination efforts like the IJA and the RCT are positive steps, much more work is needed to simplify processes across Canada more quickly.

Recommendations

- Allow workers from a different province/territory from where they work to stay enrolled in their home province's WCB system for a set time period before they must switch providers, similar to the way health insurance works for individuals. This policy would allow businesses to forgo time-consuming paperwork for short-term jobs and give them more leeway for longer-term ones.
- Mutually recognize other jurisdictions' OHS rules and regulations, allowing exceptions only where justified by legitimate health and safety considerations. This move would ensure that safety requirements that are sufficient in one jurisdiction are sufficient for all of them, allowing businesses to adapt their practices to one standard rather than multiple standards.
- Utilize a negative list approach and ensure all requirements/exceptions are listed in a consolidated location, with absence from the list indicating they are not a requirement. This approach, which assumes openness unless explicitly exempted, will reduce confusion for business owners.

Case study: Interprovincial trade between Ontario and Nova Scotia

Small business owner turned bureaucrat

Consider Robin, a hypothetical construction business owner based in Ontario—a province that has announced a bill for mutual recognition.²⁹ After years of hard work, her company has grown from just 10 employees to 50, and she is now eager to expand her business into other provinces. When an opportunity arises in Nova Scotia—a province that has already legislated mutual recognition—Robin jumps at the opportunity, only to discover that navigating another province's rules and regulations is anything but simple.³⁰

To carry out the contract, Robin plans to send out 10 of her workers who are based in Ontario to Nova Scotia for two to three months to complete the job. This means that Robin must make sure that her business and workers fit Nova Scotia's regulations and compliance standards. In addition to the

administrative challenges of securing her employees' temporary housing and other miscellaneous tasks, WCB is a top priority.

While Ontario's WSIB offering coverage for Ontario-based employees working out of province for up to six months, Nova Scotia requires that businesses employing three or more workers operating in a "mandatory industry" register with its own WCB. This means that Robin has no choice but to figure out what qualifies as a "mandatory industry" in Nova Scotia and register. Since construction is a mandatory industry (the only businesses exempt in Nova Scotia are those that employ fewer than three employees for less than five days in a calendar year), Robin begins her registration process.

WCB Nova Scotia offers an online registration process which seems straightforward until Robin encounters a roadblock: Nova Scotia requires a physical business address within the province to complete registration. There is no clear guidance on their website about how to handle this scenario and Robin is forced to call WCB Nova Scotia for clarification. The phone call takes only about 3 minutes, which is great, and Robin is met with friendly service. However, what should have been a straightforward process feels unnecessarily complex.ⁱⁱⁱ

With her registration finally complete, Robin discovers that she must pay different premium rates for those workers who will be situated in Nova Scotia for the period of time they're there. WCB rates vary based on the type of industry the business is in and the type of work they do. If Robin's business is building housing units, Ontario's premium rate is set to \$2.32, while Nova Scotia is more than double that, at \$4.90.^{31, 32, iv} This means that if Robin sends 10 of her workers who make \$60,000 per year to Nova Scotia and they earn \$5,000 while there, she would report the \$5,000 to Nova Scotia and the rest to Ontario. If her 10 employees stayed in Ontario, Robin would pay a premium of \$13,920 on top of their annual payroll. However, because of the cross-provincial work, she now has to pay approximately \$14,050 to two different jurisdictions (\$11,600 to Ontario and \$2,450 to Nova Scotia). The two provinces often use different industry classifications as well, adding an additional layer of complexity in determining what rate she will actually be paying and must budget for.

Robin's work does not end there. Now she must start her research to comply with Nova Scotia's workplace safety regulations. Despite working on identical construction projects in both provinces, with identical risks, Robin discovers the equipment she must provide for her employees in Nova Scotia differs from what she routinely gives her employees in Ontario, including first aid kits. Whereas Ontario complies with the CSA Z1220-17 standard, Nova Scotia recently updated its workplace first aid kit requirements to comply with the CSA Z1220-24 standard, meaning its contents slightly differ.³³ As well, while in Nova Scotia, the number of first aid kits and aiders required varies based on the number of employees per shift, type of workplace, and surface travel time to emergency services (see Appendix - Table 2), among other things. Robin would not have known this, had she not searched top to bottom for the differences, spending an exorbitant amount of time looking for what may be different and what may not be. Adding salt to the wound, it does not help that these different pieces are not compiled in an easily accessible format.

Thankfully, Robin's team consists of general labourers and will not require additional registration to regulatory bodies. However, if this were a bigger project requiring other activities such as on-site

ⁱⁱⁱ A co-author of this report called WCB Nova Scotia to verify the length of time it takes for the service provider to pick up (general inquiries line). The call (initiated at 9:26 A.M. CT) was picked up within a minute and the co-author was able to ask whether this hypothetical business had to apply and what to do when the business has no physical location in Nova Scotia (finished at 9:29 A.M. CT). It is important to note that this experience may not accurately reflect all business owners' experiences as there could be differences due to time, location, different provincial boards, etc.

^{iv} For Ontario, this type of work is covered under "Residential Building Construction", while in Nova Scotia, which has many more classifications, it would likely fall under "Construction, multiple housing units" or "Construction, Single Family Housing", both of which have the same rate.

surveying, engineering, or electrical work, each would require separate registration with Nova Scotia’s regulatory bodies—adding yet another layer of cost and delay.

Throughout this process, Robin is struck by how scattered and inaccessible the required information is. Without legal teams or compliance experts, small businesses like hers must spend hours digging through regulations, often with no clear answers in sight, relying on third parties (such as CFIB or other business consulting agencies) to provide support.

Despite the growing demand for construction work across Canada, Robin is disheartened by the time and resources spent navigating these interjurisdictional differences. While mutual recognition is a step forward, key regulatory and administrative barriers such as differences in WCB registration and safety equipment requirements remain untouched. For businesses with limited resources, the additional costs, time, and compliance risk often outweigh the potential benefits, making it more appealing to stay within provincial borders.

Summary: Key barriers faced by Robin despite mutual recognition agreements

Requirements navigated:

- Registration with Nova Scotia’s WCB, despite existing WSIB coverage in Ontario
- Calculating and paying WCB premiums at Nova Scotia’s rate
- Complying with different workplace safety standards, from updated first aid kit contents to OHS health committees
- Researching each regulation one-by-one as no centralized guide is provided

“We are in the construction business and deal with multiple agencies such as WCB, permitting, transportation regulations, safety requirements, labour laws, etc. It does not make sense to occasionally work in other provinces based on the administrative process. It makes sense to concentrate on obtaining work in our province to minimize the administrative requirements.”

Construction business owner, Saskatchewan

“I own a business with employees who work across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Ontario. The cost and red tape adds up when I have to register and keep four separate accounts, licences, and paperwork for each of my employees. I always account for at least 10% in my budget for these overhead fees to ensure I’m in compliance.”

Consulting business owner, Manitoba

The international look

International models show that greater harmonization and mutual recognition are achievable and can be implemented without undermining provincial or territorial autonomy.

European Union (EU)

In the European Union (EU), the Framework Directive (89/391/EEC) sets out minimum OHS requirements across all member states.³⁴ This ensures that workers receive a consistent baseline of protection, while still allowing individual countries to exceed those standards based on their specific needs or contexts. This balance between consistency and local flexibility helps maintain high levels of worker protection while reducing the unnecessary regulatory patchwork.

Complementing this is the EU's A1 certificate, a document that facilitates cross-border labour for "posted workers" (employees who are temporarily sent to another EU country to provide services).³⁵ The certificate ensures that posted workers remain enrolled in their home country's social security and workers' compensation system, not requiring them to register separately in the receiving country's system. The certificate system legally guarantees that posted workers retain access to their home country's full social security coverage, including workers' compensation, while temporarily working in another member state. This single, portable certificate is legally recognized across all EU member states, reducing the administrative burden. It streamlines short- to medium-term cross-border assignments and ensures uninterrupted benefits.³⁶

Australia

Australia offers another compelling model. While its workers' compensation systems remain state-managed, the country has significantly improved regulatory consistency through a harmonized Work Health and Safety (WHS) framework, adopted by most states and territories under the Model WHS Laws.³⁷ These shared standards cover everything from hazard identification to risk management protocols, making it easier for businesses operating across state lines to understand and comply with safety rules.

In addition, the Automatic Mutual Recognition (AMR) scheme allows licensed workers to operate in participating jurisdictions without having to reapply for local credentials.³⁸ Workers simply notify the receiving state or territory, and their home licence is automatically recognized. This model applies to a wide range of professions such as professional engineering, estate agents, conveyancers, rooming house operators, etc., and there is no fee to submit an AMR notification. However, regulators can still intervene where there are public safety concerns, and workers are required to familiarize themselves with the rules and regulations that are in place in the receiving jurisdiction.

Conclusion

Canada's fragmented approach to professional recognition continues to create unnecessary obstacles for skilled workers, employers, and the broader economy. While protecting public safety should be of utmost importance, overly rigid and inconsistent regulatory frameworks across jurisdictions can hinder labour mobility at a time when access to talent is urgently needed. Governments must work together to minimize exceptions, mutually recognize equivalent qualifications, and implement flexible solutions that allow professionals and other types of labour to contribute their skills more quickly across the country. Doing so would not only support a more mobile and responsive workforce, but also help address urgent service gaps, unlock productivity, and promote Canada's economic growth.

Appendix

Table 1

WORKERS' COMPENSATION: AVERAGE PREMIUM RATES

Jurisdiction	2025 Provisional Average Assessment Rates (per \$100 insurance earning)
British Columbia	\$1.55
Alberta	\$1.41
Saskatchewan	\$1.28
Manitoba	\$0.95
Ontario	\$1.25
Quebec	\$1.48
New Brunswick	\$1.10
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$1.73
Prince Edward Island	\$1.25
Nova Scotia	\$2.65
Yukon	\$2.09
Northwest Territories & Nunavut	\$2.40

Table 2

EXAMPLE: OHS REGULATIONS FOR BUSINESSES WITH 50 OR MORE EMPLOYEES IN ON VS. NS

Regulations	Ontario	Nova Scotia
Post a written healthy and safety policy	Required	Required
Assign a Health and Safety Committee	Required: At least 4 employees on the committee and half must be represented by employees who do not exercise managerial functions.	Required: Employer and employees can decide how big the committee will be. At least half of the members must be non-management employees and selected by the employees they represent or by their union.
Create a Health and Safety Program with the Committee	Required	Required
Health and safety posters required in workplace	Required: Prevention Starts Here poster, Occupational Health and Safety Act, names and locations of Workplace Health and Safety Committee members, WSIB poster, OHS policy for the workplace, workplace violence and	Required: Written health and safety policy, names of current OHS committee members and how they may be contacted, minutes of the OHS committee meetings, location of first aid kits, name and phone number of workplace first aider(s).

	harassment policies.	
OHS training	<p>All workers and supervisors must complete training on basic OHS awareness and keep records of completion.</p> <p>Committee must complete Parts 1 and 2 of mandatory training: Basic Certification and Workplace-Specific Hazard Training and refresher training required every 3 years.</p>	No specific training requirements for Committee members or Representatives.
First aid kits	CSA Z1220-17 Standard kit, with one stretcher and two blankets.	CSA Z1220-24 Standard kit.
First aid trained worker	Workplaces registered with WSIB must have a first aid trained worker available. If you have more than 6 employees on any one shift, one worker must be trained in Standard Emergency First Aid (13-hour course).	The number of first aid kits and aiders required varies based on the number of employees per shift, type of workplace, and surface travel time to emergency services.
Naloxone kit	Employer must provide a naloxone kit when they become aware of one of the following scenarios: risk of a worker opioid overdose, risk that a worker overdoses while in the workplace, risk posed by a worker who performs work for the employer.	Not outlined on provincial WCB website.

Sources:

Nova Scotia, Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees and Health and Safety Representatives. Accessed: April 28, 2025. <https://novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety/jointhealthsafetycommittee.asp>

CFIB, Understanding Ontario's Health and Safety Requirements. <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/tools-resources/occupational-health-and-safety-act-workplace-ohs-on>

CFIB, Understanding Nova Scotia's Health and Safety Requirements. <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/tools-resources/occupational-health-and-safety-act-workplace-ohs-nb>

Table 3

EXAMPLE: WCB REGULATIONS FOR BUSINESSES WITH 50 OR MORE EMPLOYEES IN ON VS. NS

Regulations	Ontario	Nova Scotia
Mandatory employer registration timeline	Within 10 days of hiring employees	Immediately upon hiring
Exempt industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banks • Trust & insurance companies • Trade unions • Private daycares • Travel agencies • Photography businesses • Barber shops • Many hair salons • Funeral or embalming establishments 	Businesses that employ fewer than three employees, working less than five days in a calendar year
Registration requirement if business is out of province	Required	Required if business is part of a mandatory industry and has three or more workers in the province for five or more days in a calendar year.
Out of province coverage for Nova Scotia/Ontario employees working outside their home province	A worker is automatically covered for up to six months while temporarily working outside of Ontario if they are an Ontario resident whose usual place of employment is Ontario. Requirements are stricter if the worker is a non-resident who works in the province.	Employer must confirm with the WCB equivalent in the area where the employee will be working if coverage is required by that body. If not, Nova Scotia WCB may extend coverage to those workers if requested.
Coverage for employees working in Nova Scotia/ Ontario from another province	Non-residents whose regular job is in Ontario can claim coverage if their employer is Ontario-based and they are sent out of province for work, or—if their employer is outside Ontario—only for brief, incidental tasks (like picking up a paycheck). Other non-residents (for example, seafarers on Ontario-based vessels) may be treated as residents for assessment if their employer requests it.	Businesses based outside Nova Scotia must apply for coverage if they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate in a mandatory industry within the province. • Employ three or more workers in Nova Scotia for five days or more in a calendar year.
Registration process timeline	<i>Could not find how long it takes to register online.</i> WSIB account will be active within 3-5 business days upon registration.	Approximately 20-minute online registration process. <i>Could not find how long account activation takes.</i>

Sources:

WSIB Ontario, Operational Policy Manual. <https://www.wsib.ca/en/policy/operational-policy-manual>

Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia, Do I Need to Register? <https://www.wcb.ns.ca/Workplace-Injury-Insurance/Do-I-Need-to-Register>

Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia, Outside Nova Scotia. <https://employerguide.wcb.ns.ca/outside-nova-scotia>

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