

Lawyers: Alternative Careers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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1. Lawyer: Alternative Careers

In BC, lawyers advise clients on legal matters, draft legal documents and represent clients before courts, tribunals and administrative bodies. You work in law firms, federal, provincial and municipal governments and various businesses or you may be self-employed.

You may find that your international training and experience as a lawyer are not immediately recognized in B.C. The skills you have acquired as a lawyer (negotiation skills, logical and analytical mind, strong verbal communication skills, able to work well under pressure) can be used in these alternative careers:

- paralegal (NOC 4211)
- legal administrative assistant (NOC 1242)
- mediator
- public policy analyst / policy researchers & program officer (NOC 4168 and NOC 4164)
- bailiff (NOC 4421)

Alternative Careers:

Paralegal (NOC 4211)

Also look for these job titles: legal assistant, conveyancer (real estate paralegal), land titles examiner, legal researcher, law clerk

You prepare legal documents and conduct research to assist lawyers or other professionals. You work in law firms, legal departments in the private and public sectors, record search companies or in self-employment.

Duties include:

- assist lawyers by interviewing clients, witnesses and other related parties
- assist lawyers in preparation for trials and mediation
- prepare wills, real estate transactions and other legal documents
- research records, court files and other legal documents
- draft legal correspondence

Requirements:

- a college diploma in a paralegal (formerly legal assistant) program; note: *certification as a paralegal is not required in BC*
- other requirements for paralegals may include a bachelor's degree and/or in-house training from a law firm or other legal establishment

Skills:

- detail oriented
- good analytical reasoning skills
- logical thinker
- strong communication skills (verbal and written)

Wages:

- median hourly wage: \$27.47

Source: www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4211

Legal Administrative Assistant (NOC 1242)

Also look for these job titles: legal secretary, legal assistant, litigation secretary, real estate secretary, legal stenographer

You perform secretarial and administrative duties in law offices, legal departments of large firms, real estate companies, land title offices, municipal, provincial and federal courts and government.

Duties include:

- assist with typing and proofreading legal correspondence, including deeds, wills, affidavits and briefs
- determine and establish office procedures and routines
- set up and maintain filing systems, using knowledge of legal records and procedures and frequently controlling confidential materials and documents
- schedule appointments, meetings and conferences for your employer
- may attend court, meetings or conferences to take notes, minutes and dictation

Requirements:

- an understanding of legal terminology, legal processes and common legal documents
- completion of secondary school
- a one or two-year college program or other program for secretaries or legal secretaries.

Skills:

- detail oriented
- oral and written communication skills
- computer skills

Wages:

- median hourly wage: \$21.63

Source: <http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/1242>

Mediator

You help people resolve disputes through discussion and negotiation. Disputes may be about business or employment contracts, discrimination in the workplace, or family matters such as inheritances or child custody. You may work independently, form partnerships, or work for mediation firms.

Duties include:

- encourage communication between the disputing parties
- clarify issues and make sure the resolution process stays on track
- propose options and help parties find a reasonable solution
- put agreement details in writing and have parties sign the contract

Requirements:

- minimum of Bachelor's degree, plus work experience in a related field
- **voluntary** registration available on the 'Rosters' (Civil, Family, or Child Protection) of MediateBC Society
www.mediatebc.com/About-the-Rosters/Apply-to-the-Rosters.aspx
- lawyers who wish to act as Family Law Mediators must be accredited through the Law Society of BC
www.lawsociety.bc.ca/page.cfm?cid=1476

Skills:

- problem-solving skills
- communication skills
- sensitive
- analytical
- able to stay calm under pressure and remain neutral

Wages:

- Hourly rates range from around \$50 to \$500 an hour or more

Source: Career Cruising database (Profile for "Mediator")

<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

Public Policy Analyst (NOC 4168) /

Social Policy Researchers & Program Officers (NOC 4164)

Public policy analysts

- give advice to politicians on the social, economic and political effects of government decisions. Most work for governments.

Policy researchers and program officers

- prepare reports, analyze information, give advice and manage programs in a variety of areas. You work for government agencies, educational institutions, research organizations, and consulting firms.

Duties for *public policy analysts*:

- advise politicians or diplomats on government policies
- attend meetings and negotiations
- participate as members of boards and tribunals
- coordinate setting up and running of elections

Duties for *policy researchers and program officers*:

- do research, analyze information and prepare reports and plans to solve economic and business problems
- promote public awareness and education

Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree is the minimum requirement for becoming a ***public policy analyst***. Common Bachelor's degrees for public policy analysts include law and social sciences. A master's degree may be required.
- Bachelor's degree in a science or social sciences field related to the program area for a ***Policy Researcher & Program Officer***; master's degree may also be required.

Skills:

Public Policy Analyst:

- excellent research and analytical skills
- ability to understand complex issues
- excellent written and verbal communication skills

Policy Researcher & Program Officer:

- analytical
- able to understand complex issues
- communication skills
- knowledge of current social, economic, and environmental issues

Wages:

- median hourly wage: 33.37 (***Public Policy Analyst***)
- median hourly wage: \$29.00 (***Policy Researcher & Program Officers***)

Sources:

<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4168> ;

<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4164>

Bailiff (NOC 4421)

Bailiffs serve legal orders and documents, and seize or repossess personal property from people who have failed to pay the money they owe to companies, landlords, or the government.

Court Bailiffs work under contract to the Ministry of the Attorney General. You are legally authorized to enforce civil court orders, including *eviction of persons from residential tenancy*.

See: www.consumerprotectionbc.ca/consumers-debt-collection/how-can-we-help/bailiff

Duties include:

- locate people who owe money
- find property and make seizures and removals

Requirements:

- completion of secondary school
- must obtain a Debt Collector licence from Consumer Protection BC
www.consumerprotectionbc.ca/images/dc_collector_application.pdf
 - applicant for Debt Collector licence must pass the Debt Collection examination
www.consumerprotectionbc.ca/businesses-debt-collection-home/debt-collector-examination
- basic legal training to become familiar with the local laws and statutes
- criminal record check

Skills:

- physically fit
- good with people
- calm and persuasive in difficult situations
- patient

Wages:

- median hourly wage \$29.08

Source: www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4421

2. Employment Outlook

Industry sources report that there is currently demand for **paralegals** in the province. Organizations that hire paralegals, such as those offering real estate, financial, insurance and legal services, are expected to expand as the need for their services increases due to population growth.

Job Openings Outlook in BC (NOC 4211)

| | |
|--|-------|
| % of job openings from replacement | 74% |
| % of job openings from expansion | 26% |
| Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024) | 1.0% |
| Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024) | 1,220 |

Source: www.workbc.ca/

For **legal administrative assistants**, most new job opportunities that come available in the next few years will arise from the need to replace retiring workers. Some employers are finding it difficult to find candidates with hands-on practical experience and knowledge in the various areas of legal practice. Legal administrative assistants with training and experience in litigation and conveyance procedures, as well as those with strong computer and communication skills, will be highly sought after.

Job Openings Outlook in BC (NOC 1242)

| | |
|--|-------|
| % of job openings from replacement | 73% |
| % of job openings from expansion | 27% |
| Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024) | 1.0% |
| Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024) | 2,320 |

Source: www.workbc.ca/

Social Policy Researchers, Consultants & Program Officers

Job Openings Outlook in BC (NOC 4164)

| | |
|--|-------|
| % of job openings from replacement | 77% |
| % of job openings from expansion | 23% |
| Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024) | 0.9% |
| Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024) | 1,310 |

Source: www.workbc.ca/

For ***bailiffs***, few new openings are expected in the coming years. The majority of job openings will be due to retirements. Industry sources also report that there are limited opportunities for court bailiffs. Workers are only appointed as court bailiffs if you work for employers who have contracts with the Ministry of Attorney General to provide bailiff services. There are a limited number of these positions in the province, turnover is low and the work term is restricted to the length of the employer's contract with the Ministry of Attorney General.

Job Openings Outlook in BC (NOC 4421)

| | |
|--|------|
| % of job openings from replacement | 96% |
| % of job openings from expansion | 4% |
| Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024) | 0.1% |
| Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024) | 150 |

Source: www.workbc.ca/

3. Retraining

You may want to consider upgrading your skills to increase your employment options in this field. The following courses may improve your current skills:

Capilano University, School of Legal Studies: *Paralegal Certificate* /*Certificate Online*

- Part-time program is available in two delivery modes: onsite (face to face) or online:

www.capilanou.ca/paralegal/Paralegal-Certificate/

Vancouver Community College: *Paralegal Certificate*

- Ongoing part-time program; takes 1-3 years to complete

www.vcc.ca/programscourses/program-areas/business/paralegal-certificate/

Justice Institute of BC (JIBC): Certificate in Conflict Resolution: Specialization in Mediation/Third-Party Intervention

- Provides skills in formal and informal mediation. A 252-hour (36 training days) program; hours can be applied towards admission to the BC Mediator Roster www.jibc.ca/programs-courses/schools-departments/school-community-social-justice/centre-conflict-resolution/programs/certificate-conflict-resolution-specialization-mediationthird-party-intervention

You may also wish to browse workshops and courses announced through:

- **BC Legal Management Association (BCLMA): Events Calendar**

<http://bclma.org/events/>

- **BC Paralegal Association**

<http://www.bcparalegalassociation.com/events>

4. Searching for Jobs

BC Government Job Postings

https://search.employment.gov.bc.ca/cgi-bin/a/searchjobs_quick.cgi

B.C. Legal Management Association (BCLMA)

<http://bclma.org/job-bank/>

B.C. Paralegal Association (BCPA) Job Bank

www.bcparalegalassociation.com/

Accessible to members only

Legal Services Society (LSS)

www.lss.bc.ca/general/careers.php

Eva Lee & Associates Legal Support Recruitment

www.evalee.ca/

R. Johnson Legal Recruitment

<http://rjohnsoncorp.com/legal-jobs/>

Indeed.ca

www.indeed.ca

5. Volunteering in the Field

Volunteering can help you to explore a new career and learn more about the legal system in BC. You will meet new people and build a network of contacts that can lead to information on job openings and inside connections with potential employers.

The following organizations accept volunteers:

Canadian-Universities.net: Volunteer for Justice and Legal Organizations in Vancouver

www.canadian-universities.net/Volunteer/Justice_and_Legal-British_Columbia-Vancouver.html

Justice and legal organizations in Vancouver offering volunteer opportunities

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, BC & Yukon Division

<https://mssociety.ca/support-services/programs-and-services/service/volunteer-legal-advocacy-program-bc-yukon>

Volunteer Legal Advocacy Program (VLAP)

Volunteer BC

www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/

Volunteer in Public Institutions

Many public institutions accept volunteers; consider volunteering for your local municipality.

- **Municipalities:** complete list of BC cities and towns available at:
www.ubcm.ca/EN/main/about/ubcm-members/municipalities.html, examples are:
 - City of Vancouver, vancouver.ca/people-programs/volunteering.aspx,
 - City of Richmond, <https://icanhelp.richmond.ca/custom/501/>

West Coast LEAF

<http://www.westcoastleaf.org/take-action/volunteer/>

Non-profit society that promotes women's equality through the law

West Coast Environmental Law

wcel.org/about-us/volunteer-opportunities

6. Helpful Resources

BC Legal Management Association

www.bclma.org/

BC Paralegal Association

www.bcparalegalassociation.com/

MediateBC

<http://www.mediatebc.com/>

Click on 'Job Search Resources' at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca> for help on:

- resumes & cover letters
- getting Canadian work experience
- networking for employment
- online social networks
- Canadian workplace culture

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Library, Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.