

Lawyers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



Contents

1. Working as a Lawyer [NOC 4112]	2
2. Skills, Education and Experience.....	7
3. Finding Jobs	8
4. Applying for a Job	12
5. Getting Help from Industry Sources	12

1. Working as a Lawyer [NOC 4112]

Job Description

Lawyers advise clients on legal matters, draft legal documents and represent clients before courts, tribunals and administrative bodies.

As a lawyer, you perform the following duties:

- tell clients about their legal rights and all matters related to law
- research legal precedents and gather evidence
- argue clients' cases before courts of law, tribunals and administrative bodies
- draft legal documents such as real estate transactions, wills, divorces and contracts and prepare statements of legal opinions
- negotiate settlements of civil disputes
- do management tasks related to the practice of law
- may act as mediator, conciliator or arbitrator
- may act as executor, trustee or guardian in estate and family law matters

Source:

WorkBC Career Profile <http://www.workbc.ca/Careers/> [search 4112]

Industry Overview

Over 11,000 lawyers practise law in British Columbia. In BC, lawyers are qualified as both *barristers* (who work primarily as counsel in court or before tribunals) and *solicitors* (who do varied office work for clients, including giving corporate or tax advice, handling real estate transactions, drafting contracts and preparing all types of documents). You may choose to practise as a barrister, solicitor or both.

The Lower Mainland currently has a possible over-supply of lawyers. As such, you may increase your chance of finding work if you are willing to relocate to other areas of the province. High grades from a recognized law school also improve your job prospects.

There is a need for lawyers with a specialization in areas such as:

- Aboriginal rights
- international law
- intellectual property, patents and trademarks
- environmental law
- Internet law
- entertainment law
- immigration law
- construction law
- mediation

Downturns in the economy may cause a decline in demand for some legal services such as estate planning and real estate transactions.

Sources:

- WorkBC
- Law Society of British Columbia <http://www.lawsociety.bc.ca>

Job Outlook in BC

Lawyers

1.1% Expected annual demand growth rate (2015-2025) **3,590** Job openings (2015-2025)

Occupation Outlook for B.C.:

% of job openings from replacement	67%
% of job openings from expansion	33%

Chart from WorkBC

WorkBC provides job openings in BC regions from 2015-2025:

Region	Expected # of Job Openings	Average Annual Employment Growth	Expected Increase in Employment
Vancouver Island	460	0.5%	55
Lower Mainland / Southwest	2,810	1.3%	1,040
Thompson-Okanagan	210	1.0%	65
Cariboo	80	1.9%	30
North Coast & Nechako	110	-2.9%	100
Northeast	100	-1.8%	90

You can learn more about working as a lawyer in BC from:

- **WorkBC Career Profile** <https://www.workbc.ca/Careers/> [search 4112]
- **Considering a Career in Law?, Law Society of British Columbia**
<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/Website/media/Shared/docs/becoming/career-in-law.pdf>

Types of Employers

Lawyers work in many settings including:

- law firms
- prosecutor's offices
- federal, provincial and municipal government departments
- various business establishments

You may also be self-employed.

Salary

In BC, the median annual salary for lawyers is \$106,638 a year.

You are typically paid a salary if you work for government agencies or large companies. If you work for law firms you are usually paid according to the number of hours you work.

Partners at law firms usually get a percentage of the firm's profits as well.

Job Bank Canada provides annual wages for lawyers in BC regions:

Location	Wage (\$/yr)		
	Low	Median	High
British Columbia	39,811	106,361	269,702
Cariboo Region	39,876	83,965	188,645
Lower Mainland - Southwest Region	43,487	111,133	310,743
Thompson--Okanagan Region	36,337	97,448	205,889
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	22,002	83,902	175,762

Source: Job Bank, Wage Report http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/wage-outlook_search-eng.do?reportOption=wage

Sources:

- Career Cruising database (Profile for Lawyer).
Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page
<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>
- WorkBC

Working Hours

As a lawyer you often work long hours, typically between 8 and 11 hours a day. During trials or big negotiations, this can stretch to 15 or 16 hours a day. Weekend work is also common.

You may have more regular hours if you work for government agencies or businesses.

2. Skills, Education and Experience

Skills

- excellent verbal and written communication skills
- ability to demonstrate logical thinking, with enjoyment of arguments and complex ideas
- strong negotiation skills
- interest in researching legal precedents and gathering evidence
- excellent ability to work well under pressure
- excellent attention to detail
- analytical
- excellent people skills
- ability to demonstrate and maintain high ethical standards

Sources: WorkBC & Career Cruising

Education and Experience

To practice law in British Columbia you must:

- Complete a law degree from a recognized institution, which is generally three years of graduate study
- Complete the Law Society of British Columbia's admission program
- Be registered as a member of the Law Society of British Columbia

Qualifications

This occupation is regulated in British Columbia.

In order to practice law in British Columbia you must be a member of the Law Society of British Columbia.

All applicants to the Law Society are required to complete the Law Society Admission Program, which includes a 10 week Professional Legal Training Course, two qualification examinations, and nine months of articles.

The Law Society must also be satisfied that you are of good character before being permitted to practise law. For more information, contact:

For further information on licensing and membership see:

- **Law Society of British Columbia**
<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/becoming-a-lawyer-in-bc/>

Internationally trained and accredited Lawyers

If you have a law degree from a country other than Canada you must first obtain either a Canadian LL.B. degree or a *Certificate of Qualification* issued by the National Committee on Accreditation (NCA).

With either of these qualifications, you may then apply to enrol in the Law Society Admission Program (LSAP).

To apply for a *Certificate of Qualification*, contact the National Committee on Accreditation. Upon review of your completed application, the NCA will advise you whether you must complete further study at a Canadian law school or pass certain examinations set by the NCA. It is your responsibility to arrange for completion of the NCA's requirements.

For more information:

- **National Committee on Accreditation (NCA)**
<http://flsc.ca/national-committee-on-accreditation-nca/>
- **Law Society of British Columbia. Transfers from Another Country**
<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/becoming-a-lawyer-in-bc/transfers/transfer-to-bc-from-outside-canada/>

3. Finding Jobs

You'll find job advertisements in local newspapers, trade journals, and electronic sources, as well as through professional associations' publications.

Local Newspapers

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* & *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily and the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and in *The Province* on Sundays.

Job Freeway

- Available in print at the Central Library or online at <http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/jobfreewaycom>

NOTE: *You can only access this database from the Central Library or VPL branch libraries. Access is NOT available from outside the Library.*

Online Job Postings

- **JobsinLaw.ca**
<http://www.jobsinlaw.ca/>
- **Indeed.com**
http://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search
Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards.
- **Legal Services Society Careers**
<http://www.lss.bc.ca/general/currentVacancies.asp>
Current vacancies within the Legal Services Society of BC
- **Legaljob.ca**
<http://www.legaljob.ca>

Professional Associations' Career Resources

- **British Columbia Branch. Canadian Bar Association**
<http://cbabc.org/Legal-Community/Job-Board>

Identifying the Right Position

When you browse job advertisements, you'll find a range of different job titles that are relevant.

For lawyers, look for these related job titles:

- Advocate, Legal
- Attorney
- Crown prosecutor
- Barrister
- Corporate counsel
- Legal advisor
- Legal Aid Lawyer
- Solicitor
- Defence Counsel
- In-house Legal Counsel
- Litigator
- Queen's Counsel

Source: <http://noc.esdc.gc.ca/English/noc/QuickSearch.aspx?ver=16&val65=4112>

Creating a List of Potential Employers

You can use directories to produce lists of employers in the legal sector in Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Business in Vancouver. "Biggest Law Firms in Vancouver"**
Available at VPL, Central Branch or online at <https://www.biv.com/datatables/>
- **British Columbia Legal Telephone Directory**
Available at Central Library 340.05 B86

- **Canadian Law List**

Available at Central Library, 340 C21 or online at

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

- **Canadian Legal LEXPERT Directory**

<http://www.lexpert.ca/directory/>

- **Directory / The Canadian Bar Association British Columbia**

Available at Central Library 340.09711 C21b

- **Martindale-Hubbell**

Available at Central Library 340.05 M38b or Online at

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

- **Reference Canada**

<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>

Click on "Start Search" beside Canadian Businesses, then select the "Advanced Search" button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "law" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.

Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page

NOTE: *You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).*

4. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume or curriculum vitae and a cover letter. These should identify the position you are applying for and summarize your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, <http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following pathfinders which are available in print at the Central Library or online at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Writing Resumes and Cover Letters]

- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Getting Canadian Work Experience]

- **Networking for Employment**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Networking for Employment]

- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Learn More About Working in BC and Canada]

5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

Industry Associations

Associations for lawyers in BC and Canada can provide information and assistance. Registration and fees are required for membership.

- **Law Society of British Columbia**
<http://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/>
Provincial regulatory organization for the legal profession in BC
- **Canadian Bar Association, British Columbia Branch**
<http://www.cba.org/BC/home/main/>
- **Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia**
<http://www.cle.bc.ca>
Source of continuing professional education for British Columbia lawyers

Industry Journals

Search the Vancouver Public Library catalogue for journals related to your profession. Examples at the Central Library and online:

- **BarTalk** / Canadian Bar Association BC
<http://www.cbabc.org/BarTalk/home>
- **Canadian Lawyer**
Available at the Central Library, 350.05 C2122
<http://www.canadianlawyermag.com/>

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/> .