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PUBLICATION

Employment Update: Long-Term Illness / Sick Leave in Canada: What Employers Need to Know

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British Columbia and Alberta are the latest provinces to move to a 27-week, job-protected illness / sick leave. With Bill 30 receiving Royal Assent on November 27, 2025, B.C. implemented the 27-week leave, a significant change that follows similar reforms already adopted in many other provinces. Alberta continued the trend by announcing similar changes to its employment standards legislation effective January 1, 2026.

These developments come amid a broader recalibration of Canada's sick-leave framework, following the federal extension of Employment Insurance sickness benefits and provincial efforts to align with that federal standard. This change signals continued momentum in long-term medical leave and requires employers to update their policies, tracking systems and disability-management practices to remain compliant and manage extended absences effectively.

Federal Baseline: EI Sickness Benefits up to 26 Weeks

The federal government extended EI sickness benefits from 15 to 26 weeks for claims established on or after December 18, 2022. In addition, federally regulated private-sector employees also have medical leave protections under the *Canada Labour Code*, including up to 27 weeks of unpaid medical leave and a separate entitlement to paid medical leave.

Alberta: Extension of Long-Term Illness Leave from 16 weeks to 27 weeks

The Alberta government has announced that, effective January 1, 2026, employees can take up to 27 weeks of long-term illness and injury leave per calendar year. If an employee started the leave prior to January 1, 2026, the length of leave can be adjusted. If the new end date of the leave goes beyond the date on the medical certificate provided to the employer, a new medical certificate must be provided to the employer. This represents an extension to the 16 weeks of leave that have been available to employees in Alberta since 2018.

British Columbia: New 27-Week Leave Now in Force

On October 20, 2025, B.C. introduced Bill 30 to create a new long-term, job-protected medical leave. The Bill recently received Royal Assent and is now in force. It amends the *Employment Standards Act* to provide up to 27 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave within a 52-week period for a serious personal illness or injury. Employees qualify if they are unable to work for at least seven consecutive days. The leave may be taken in blocks of one or more weeks, either consecutively or intermittently, to accommodate treatment schedules or episodic conditions. To access the leave, employees must provide a certificate from a health practitioner, such as a medical doctor or a nurse practitioner, confirming their inability to work and the expected start and end dates.

Ontario: 27 Week Long-Term Illness Leave

Effective June 19, 2025, Ontario established a new unpaid, job-protected "long-term illness leave" of up to 27 weeks in a 52-week period. Eligibility requires 13 consecutive weeks of employment and a certificate from a qualified health practitioner stating that the employee has a serious medical condition and specifying the period during which the employee will not be working. The leave can be taken in non-consecutive periods within the 52-week window. If an employee takes any part of a week as long-term illness leave, an employer may deem that a full week has been taken. However, for purposes of scheduling, employers cannot require an employee to take a full week off, prevent work earlier in the week, or prevent a return to work later in the week.

Other Provinces: Long-Term Sick Leave Entitlements

The following jurisdictions have implemented or announced long-term sick leave aligned to a 27-week framework. Key features include eligibility thresholds and certification requirements.

Province	Leave Name	Status	Entitlement	Eligibility and Proof Required
Alberta	Long-Term Illness and Injury Leave	Effective January 1, 2026	Up to 27 weeks per calendar year Employees can't be terminated or laid off while on a job-protected leave unless the employer suspends or discontinues the business.	Available after being employed for at least 90 days with the same employer Employee must provide a medical certificate from a physician or nurse practitioner that states the estimated duration of the leave
British	Serious	In force	Up to 27 weeks	Applies to employees covered by the B

Columbia	Personal Illness or Injury Leave	since November 28, 2025	unpaid within any 52-week period May be taken in multiple periods in minimum one-week blocks Job-protected with reinstatement to same or comparable position	*Employment Standards Act* who are unable to work for at least 7 consecutiv days due to a serious personal illness o injury; no minimum service has currentl been prescribed Employee must provide a medical certificate from a physician or nurse practitioner confirming inability to work and the leave dates/duration.
Manitoba	Long-Term Leave for Serious Injury or Illness	In force since November 7, 2024	Up to 27 weeks within a 52-week period By default, one continuous period unless otherwise agreed or provided by a collective agreement	Available after 90 days with the same employer. Certificate from a physician verifying expected incapacity of at least two weeks; employer may require a fitness-to-return note.
Newfoundland and Labrador	Long-Term Illness, Long-Term Injury and Organ Donation Leave	In force since December 4, 2024	Up to 27 weeks within a 52-week period for long-term illness, long-term injury, or organ donation	Available after 30 days' continuous employment. Certificate from a medical practitioner o nurse practitioner stating the need for extended care or recovery and start/estimated end dates.
Nova Scotia	Serious Illness or Injury Leave	In force since January 1, 2025	Up to 27 weeks within a 52-week period May be taken intermittently in minimum blocks of one week	Available after three months' employme with the current employer and being diagnosed with a serious illness or injur If requested, the employee must provid medical confirmation on the prescribed Labour Standards form.

Ontario	Long-Term Illness Leave	In force since June 19, 2025	Up to 27 weeks within a 52-week period Weeks need not be consecutive Any part of a week may be counted as a full week towards the 27-week maximum	Available after 13 consecutive weeks o employment due to a serious medical condition. Certificate from a qualified health practitioner stating serious medical condition and the period the employee will not be working; may be provided af the leave has begun if needed.
Quebec	Non–work-related accident or illness		Up to 26 weeks in any 12-month period	A medical note is not mandatory, but th employer may request an official document confirming the reason for the absence if circumstances warrant it, including due to the duration or frequen of the absence.
Saskatchewan	Illness or Injury Leave	Passed May 13, 2025; scheduled to come into force January 1, 2026	Extended from 12 to 27 weeks within a 52-week period	Available to employees employed by th same employer for more than 13 consecutive weeks before the leave begins. Applies when absent due to the employee's own serious illness or injury Employers may request a medical certificate only if the absence exceeds five consecutive working days, or if the employee has had two or more non-consecutive absences of two or mo working days due to sickness or injury i the preceding 12 months.

Other provinces and territories have not yet adopted a 26/27-week sick leave framework. For example, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island offer shorter general sick-leave entitlements.

Key Takeaways for Employers

- **Alignment with EI.** B.C., Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec now provide job-protected long-term medical leave that corresponds with the federal

EI sickness benefits period. Alberta and Saskatchewan have passed similar amendments effective January 1, 2026.

- **Certification differences.** Most jurisdictions require a practitioner's certificate confirming inability to work and expected dates for long-term medical leaves.
- **Intermittent leave planning.** Because these long-term leaves can be taken in multiple periods, employers should expect increased requests for intermittent scheduling and ensure tracking systems can accommodate such usage tied to treatment cycles or episodic conditions.
- **Policy updates.** Employers should update their leave, attendance and disability management policies to capture new eligibility thresholds, certification timelines and content, counting rules for part-weeks and benefit continuation obligations. Benefit continuation varies by province.
- **Accommodation.** Accommodation practices should reflect intermittent returns to work, gradual reintegration and fitness-to-return requirements where permitted.
- **Training.** Managers should be trained on non-discrimination, confidentiality and reinstatement rights, including the obligation to return employees to the same or comparable position without reduction in pay or benefits where required.

For specifically tailored advice on long-term statutory sick leaves, please reach out to a member of the Blaney's Labour and Employment Group.

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