

Mobility: Immigration alert

April 2026

Canada

Alberta introduces Bill 26: Immigration Oversight Act

Executive summary

On 1 April 2026, the Government of Alberta introduced Bill 26, the *Immigration Oversight Act*, proposing a new provincial oversight framework governing the recruitment and hiring of foreign nationals. If enacted, the legislation would introduce mandatory registration requirements for employers, a provincial licensing regime for foreign worker recruiters and immigration consultants, and grant expanded compliance, oversight, and enforcement powers to the government of Alberta.

Government communications indicate that the proposed employer registration regime is expected to apply, at a minimum, to employers hiring through LMIA-based streams under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. However, the Bill itself is drafted more broadly, and the ultimate scope of application, including any exemptions, will be determined through forthcoming regulations and ministerial discretion.

The Alberta government has cited a significant increase in the number of temporary residents in recent years, as well as limited provincial visibility into immigration flows affecting labour markets and public services, as key drivers behind the proposed legislation. Bill 26 is intended to increase transparency and accountability and to address fraud and worker exploitation, rather than restrict the number of foreign workers entering the province.

Mandatory employer registration

Bill 26 would require employers to obtain and maintain a provincial Certificate of Registration to recruit or hire foreign nationals in Alberta, subject to prescribed exemptions. Key elements of the proposed regime include:

- Certificates are issued for a prescribed period (up to a maximum of three years) and are not transferable
- Ongoing eligibility requirements and renewal obligations
- Authority to suspend or cancel a registration for noncompliance, including where false, misleading, or incomplete information is provided
- Discretionary exemptions for certain employers or classes of foreign nationals, including potential transitional exemptions, subject to conditions

Several provinces already operate employer registration or oversight models, though the scope and triggers vary. For example, British Columbia introduced a mandatory employer registration requirement in December 2020 that applies primarily to employers hiring LMIA-based temporary foreign workers and generally does not apply to workers hired under the federal International Mobility Program. Saskatchewan and Manitoba maintain broader employer and recruiter oversight frameworks focused on recruitment practices and worker protection across multiple immigration pathways. Bill 26 would move Alberta toward a similar provincial oversight model, with its precise scope to be defined through regulation.

Licensing of foreign worker recruiters and immigration consultants

The Bill proposes a provincial licensing regime for foreign worker recruiters and immigration consultants operating in connection with Alberta employment.

While immigration consultants are currently regulated at the federal level through the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants, Bill 26 would introduce an additional layer of provincial oversight requiring registration at the provincial level. The legislation allows for exemptions to be established by regulation, which may include certain regulated professionals, such as individuals governed by a provincial law society. Employers may face indirect compliance and operational risk where third-party recruiters or immigration consultants engaged in connection with Alberta employment are unlicensed or later found to be noncompliant.

Codes of conduct, prohibited practices, and disclosure obligations

Bill 26 authorizes the establishment of codes of conduct for employers, recruiters, and immigration consultants and prohibits several practices, including:

- Charging recruitment related fees to foreign workers
- Requiring foreign workers to use a specific immigration consultant
- Acting as, or holding oneself out as, a recruiter or immigration consultant without proper licensing
- Contractual waivers of statutory rights

Recruitment and immigration service contracts would be governed by Alberta law, and any waiver of rights under the Act would be void. The Bill also introduces enhanced disclosure obligations, including disclosure of referral fees and situations where a party provides both recruitment and immigration services.

Oversight, enforcement, and penalties

Bill 26 would grant the Alberta government broad audit and investigatory powers, establish a formal complaints process, and create offences and penalties for noncompliance. Proposed enforcement tools include administrative penalties, suspension or cancellation of registrations or licences, significant monetary penalties, and, in serious cases, potential imprisonment. Similar enforcement mechanisms already exist in other provinces, reflecting a broader trend toward increased provincial oversight of foreign worker recruitment and employment practices.

Impact on employers

If passed in its current form, Bill 26 would have material implications for Alberta employers who hire foreign workers, including:

- Increased provincial compliance oversight and risk exposure
- New administrative requirements tied to employer registration and ongoing eligibility
- Potential disruption to recruitment and mobility timelines if registration or licensing is delayed or denied

Experience in other provinces illustrates the importance of early planning. In British Columbia, employer registration processing times for LMI-based hiring can fluctuate depending on volume and compliance complexity, and employers cannot proceed with LMI applications until provincial registration is approved. Similar timing considerations may arise in Alberta once the regime is implemented. Employers may also wish to reassess due diligence processes relating to third-party recruiters and immigration service providers.

Key steps

Although Bill 26 is not yet law, employers with Alberta operations may wish to begin preparing by:

- Reviewing recruitment and immigration service arrangements to ensure alignment with proposed fee, disclosure, and conduct requirements
- Assessing internal recordkeeping and compliance processes
- Mapping workforce and mobility timelines to identify where provincial registration could affect hiring or work permit sequencing
- Engaging legal or immigration advisors early to evaluate readiness for a provincial registration and licensing regime and to help minimize downstream delays.

Bill 26 reflects Alberta's move toward a more formalized provincial oversight model for foreign worker recruitment and employment, consistent with trends already established in other provinces. Much of the practical impact will depend on forthcoming regulations, including registration scope, exemptions, processes, and implementation timelines. Employers that rely on global talent should anticipate closer provincial scrutiny and more structured compliance requirements if the legislation is enacted.

EY Law will continue to monitor the Bill as it passes through the legislative process and provide updates as further regulatory details and implementation timelines become available. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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