



# Employment Standards

EIGHT YEARS  
OF NEGLECT

## What are Employment Standards?

The **Employment Standards Act (ESA)** covers the minimum standards for workers in British Columbia and sets guidelines to protect workers. The BC Liberal Government made it clear that they were more concerned with protecting business than the most vulnerable workers in the province.

“Before government got out of the business of protecting child workers, it would never have approved an application where child workers had to work wearing steel-toed boots and latex gloves. Government would never have allowed a 12-year-old to work with or around power tools or where they could be exposed to hazardous chemicals.”

Graeme Moore, Times Colonist  
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## The BC Liberals “Self-help kit”

In addition to ending the requirement that employers post workers’ rights in the workplace, the provincial government eliminated the traditional complaints-based process and replaced it with an employee “self-help kit.” While the government claims statistics show their new regime is working, independent studies and anecdotal evidence indicate workers are simply less aware of their rights and the “self-help kit” simply deters workers from filing complaints.

## Timeline: Campbell’s Cuts to Employment Standards

### October 29, 2001— Training Wage

Effective November 15, 2001, the provincial government introduces the training wage or “first-job” rate of \$6 per hour. The rate applies to a worker’s first 500 hours of employment.

### May 13, 2002—Bill 48, Employment Standards Amendment Act

Amendments to the **ESA** include:

- Minimum work shift is reduced from four hours to two hours.
- Employers are no longer required to post a schedule of work hours or employment standards in the workplace.
- Employers are no longer required to provide 24 hours notice of a shift change.
- Employers no longer have to pay double time to employees working during their 32 hour rest period.
- Employers can avoid paying overtime by averaging the 40-hour work week over several weeks, (i.e. Week 1: 60 hours + Week 2: 0 hours + Week 3: 60 hours = NO OVERTIME).
- Fewer workers qualify for statutory holidays.
- Workers who do qualify for a statutory holiday are no

longer paid as if they worked that day, but based on an averaging of the previous 30 days.

- Workers are no longer entitled to another paid day off if they work on a holiday.
- Employers are no longer required to give workers a day off in lieu if the holiday falls on the workers scheduled day off.

### November 22, 2002— Enforcement Cuts

On November 22, 2002, the BC Liberals announced they would eliminate one-third of public service jobs including the Employment Standards Branch of the Ministry of Skills Development and Labour. The government also closed eight of seventeen regional offices. These cuts lead to dramatic drops in enforcement and reduced workers access to information about their employment rights. This was not merely a cost-cutting exercise but the first step in the BC Liberals deregulation of Employment Standards enforcement.



It’s time for a government that

**works for all British Columbians.**

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