

Privileged and Confidential

June 23, 2026

Hon. David Eby, MLA
Premier

Hon. Jennifer Whiteside, MLA
Minister of Labour

Hon. Ravi Kahlon, MLA
Minister of Jobs and Economic Growth

By email to: premier@gov.bc.ca LBR.Minister@gov.bc.ca JEDI.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier Eby, Minister Whiteside and Minister Kahlon,

Re: Call for Labour Relations Board Reform

Businesses across British Columbia face stress and upheaval. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically disrupted sales and operations and increased the debt-load of many businesses. Subsequently, businesses have experienced unprecedented costs and disruptions, many of which continue to this day.

Post-COVID-19, significant inflationary pressures have resulted in dramatic increases to labour and other input costs. Canada's changing relationship with the United States is altering the trade and commerce landscape, imposing tariffs and other barriers, making many exporters' products uncompetitive. Moreover, U.S. trade strategy is aimed at moving production and employment from countries like Canada to the United States, especially where market access is greater and costs lower. In B.C., businesses are receiving fewer commercial contracts as private and public sector construction projects have stalled. There are fewer customers generally for many businesses as our population stagnates or declines. This is leading to contraction, slow growth, regional economic disparities, the loss of employment, and a circumstance where business exits are outpacing entries.

For businesses and government, there is no single solution to improving the compounding conditions we face. Across-the-board we must address our competitiveness issues and our ability to retain and attract employment and investment. We must look at all solutions and in doing so, no stone should be left unturned, including a focus on labour and our workforce.

A skilled and productive workforce is central to B.C.'s economic success. So are good and fairly applied rules governing employers, labour and employment standards. The means to administer those rules and mediate disputes is the responsibility of the B.C. Labour Relations Board (BCLRB). Our organizations have provided input to the government's review of the B.C. Labour Relations Code launched in 2024 and work closely with government to develop labour policy. **It is now with respect to the BCLRB that we also request the government's attention and partnership.**

An erosion in confidence in the BCLRB has taken hold at a time when the Board's workload has increased in both volume and complexity. Certification applications are 138 per cent higher than in 2021, with the Board acknowledging they are well above the 25-year average. Time extensions and wait times for mediation are slowing decision-making. The Board itself has pointed to many of these deficiencies and pressures in its last annual report.

A Board under this much caseload pressure makes balanced representation more important than ever. We respect the hard work and diligence of the Board and Ministry of Labour officials to recruit new members of the Board, but we are concerned that senior labour lawyers and mediators with experience working for private sector employers are not being consistently appointed. Our concerns are echoed by legal counsel who work closely with the Board who regularly communicate its conduct and decisions to our members.

Businesses require certainty and a level playing field. Section 115 (1) of the *Labour Relations Code* requires that appointments to the Labour Relations Board be "*equal in number representative of employers and employees, respectively.*" Both the Labour Relations Code reviews of 2018 and 2024 have expressed the importance of maintaining that balance and high-functioning Board.

Business does not view the BCLRB to be consistently balanced. Private sector employers do not see themselves consistently represented on the Board where most employer representatives are principally appointed from public sector employer groups.

Reform is necessary. A balanced, modern and efficient labour relations board contributes to economic development, stable business investment conditions, and serves the interests of both employers and workers. Importantly, decisions by the BCLRB must be consistent and must be informed by the rapidly changing and complex nature of our economy and labour market.

These circumstances demand attention from government to protect the integrity of the Board and by extension the economic climate. A balanced Board is part of our collective need to meet the objectives of growing the economy, advancing major projects, productivity, and attracting private capital to British Columbia.

Our perspective is that a review and reform of the BCLRB is good for all parties as a balanced and reliable Board is in everyone's interest. The following are our recommendations for consideration:

1. Review Chair, Vice-Chair and senior Board positions and succession planning, including compensation and benefits, to establish the conditions by which senior and expert Board members may be recruited and retained on a consistent basis.
2. Form or expand a permanent expert advisory committee made up equally of lawyers representing organized labour, private sector employers, and sector groups, to provide recommendations, advice and support to the Ministry of Labour on succession planning and recruitment.
3. Provide support to the Board where this contributes to:
 - a. Improved performance standards.
 - b. Continuing Board development, education and training.
 - c. Increases the regular exchange of common issues, developments and industry and labour perspectives between the Board, employers and labour.
 - d. More effective and timely case management to allow certainty and predictability.

We believe that the reforms outlined above will restore confidence in the BCLRB and strengthen B.C.'s economic competitiveness during these challenging and vital times. A well-functioning, balanced Board is essential infrastructure for our province's labour relations system and economic prosperity.

We respectfully request the opportunity to meet with you and your colleagues to discuss these recommendations in greater detail and to work collaboratively toward solutions that serve the interests of all British Columbians. We look forward to your response and the opportunity to engage constructively on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

