



Canadian Termination / Layoff Planning Toolkit

A Practical Guide for Planning, Communicating, and Executing Terminations & Layoffs in Canada

Prepared for Human Resources Leaders, People & Culture and Leadership Teams,
and Business Owners

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Executive Overview

Workforce reductions are among the most complex, sensitive and legally sensitive actions an employer can take. This planning toolkit provides a structured, compliant, and compassionate approach tailored to Canadian employment standards. The following focus areas guide a responsible and people-centred approach to organizational change:

- Mitigate (legal and reputational) risk
- Protect employer brand
- Support departing employees with outplacement
- Support remaining employees
- Ensure compliance specific to each of the provinces
- Execute terminations, layoffs with clarity, dignity, and consistency

Outplacement plays a critical role in ensuring employees land on their feet while employers maintain trust and goodwill.



Pre-termination/Layoff Planning Checklist

To ensure compliance and minimize risk, employers can use the following considerations when assessing termination requirements:



- ☐ Ensure documentation of operational and/or financial reasons. If the termination is for performance reasons, ensure it's documented to establish:
 - lack of performance
 - progressive warnings related to failure or refusal to maintain performance at reasonable and objective standards
 - the consequences of failing to do so
 - ☐ Review the employees' letter of employment/employment agreement
 - ☐ Determine if there are related medical or disability issues that need to be considered and accommodated
 - ☐ Confirm alignment with leadership and legal counsel
 - ☐ Use objective, non-discriminatory criteria
 - ☐ Document decision-making process
 - ☐ Review provincial employment standards
 - ☐ Assess mass layoff thresholds
 - ☐ Determine if the notice period be worked by the employee in whole or part
 - ☐ Confirm notice, severance, and benefits continuation
 - ☐ Calculate statutory and common-law exposure; calculate any outstanding loans or advances to the employee
 - ☐ Model severance packages
 - ☐ Estimate benefits continuation costs
 - ☐ Identify meeting dates and times – determine if any security is necessary
 - ☐ Prepare termination letter(s)
 - ☐ Coordinate IT access removal
 - ☐ Arrange equipment return process
 - ☐ Determine if the employee signed a confidentiality agreement and, if so, confirm / include any specific duty or reference to any specific confidential information
 - ☐ Prepare messaging about support
 - ☐ Select outplacement provider - ensure coaches are ready for intake
 - ☐ Prepare mental health resources
 - ☐ Create employee FAQ
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Canadian Severance and Notice Guide

Employment standards are provincially regulated, so the rules depend entirely on where the employee(s) works. Every province sets a minimum notice period based on length of service; use this information to determine:

- Does the employee receive working notice or pay in lieu?
- How many weeks of notice apply based on tenure?
- Are there exceptions – seasonal, temporary, construction?

Province	Minimum Notice	Severance Pay	Mass Layoff Rules
Ontario	1-8 weeks	Yes (if eligible)	50+ employees
British Columbia	1-8 weeks	No	50+ employees
Alberta	1-8 weeks	No	50+ employees
Saskatchewan	1-8 weeks (based on tenure under the Saskatchewan Employment Act)	No statutory severance	10+ employees in a 4-week period (group termination rules)
Quebec	1-8 weeks	No	10+ employees
Manitoba	1-8 weeks	No	50+ employees
New Brunswick	2-8 weeks (depending on tenure)	No statutory severance	10+ employees
Newfoundland & Labrador	1-8 weeks (depending on tenure)	No general severance	50+ employees (group termination notice requirements)
Nova Scotia	1-16 weeks (depending on tenure)	No statutory severance	10+ employees (group termination rules)
Prince Edward Island	2-18 weeks (depending on tenure)	No statutory severance	10+ employees (group termination notice requirements)

Common-Law Notice

- Often exceeds statutory minimums
- Based on age, tenure, role, and job market

Benefits Continuation

- Must continue through statutory notice
- Many employers extend through severance period

Termination Meeting Scripts

This section offers examples of prepared dialogue to support respectful and compliant employee separation conversations:

Individual Script

- **Manager:** “Thank you for meeting with us. I have difficult news. Due to [business reason], your position is being eliminated effective today.”
- **HR:** “We know this is difficult. Here is your termination package, including pay, benefits, and outplacement support.”



Group Script

- Clear explanation of business rationale
- No discussion of individual performance
- Provide next steps and support options

Virtual Termination Script

- Ensure privacy – ensure employee is in a safe, private space
- Deliver message clearly and concisely
- Provide digital copies of documents
- Introduce outplacement as an immediate support

Employee Communication Structure

To ensure clarity and consistency in how termination details are communicated, the following structure outlines the essential elements to include in an employee letter:

Termination Letter

Section	Content
Employment end date	Final day of employment
Notice/Severance	Statutory & additional
Benefit	Coverage details
Record Of Employment (ROE)	Timeline
Outplacement	Access instructions

Internal Announcement

To support clear and consistent communication within the organization, the following internal announcement structure consideration outlines the key elements to include:

- High-level rationale
- No individual details
- Reinforce commitment to remaining staff

FAQ for Departing Employees

To help departing employees navigate the transition smoothly, consider the development of FAQ they may have surrounding i.e.,:

- Employment Insurance (EI) eligibility
- Benefits coverage
- Company material/equipment to return
- Outplacement access



Day-Of-Termination/Layoff Logistics Checklist

A smooth process reduces risk and maintains professionalism. Points to consider include:

Before Meetings

- Prepare documents
- Coordinate IT access removal
- Ensure booking/access to private meeting rooms

During Meetings

- Keep meetings brief – 5 to 10 minutes
- Provide written materials
- Introduce outplacement support and other support resources

After Meetings

- Disable system access
- Collect equipment
- Notify payroll and benefits teams

Risk & Legal Review

Consider an evaluation risk and seeking legal review with high-risk terminations. Some examples of a high-risk termination might include:

- Long-tenured employees
- Employees on leave – medical, parental, disability
- Terminations involving 'cause'
- Mass layoffs / restructuring



Manager Communication Considerations

To help leaders communicate organizational changes effectively and respectfully, the following considerations outline some of the key elements that should be kept in mind:

Key Principles

- Be direct, clear, and compassionate
- Avoid justifying or debating
- Do not discuss performance
- Allow silence and emotional reactions

What Not to Say

- "I know how you feel"
- "You'll find something quickly"
- "This is harder for me than for you"



Employee Support Resources

To help employees navigate their transition with confidence, consider the benefits of providing information on resources are available to provide guidance and support:

Information on Outplacement Services

- 1:1 career coaching
- Resume & LinkedIn support
- Job search strategy
- Interview preparation, and more

Mental Health Support Resources

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Community support services

Government Programs

- [Employment Insurance](#) (EI)
- Community retraining programs including government-funded employment and training supports



Employer Brand Protection Checklist

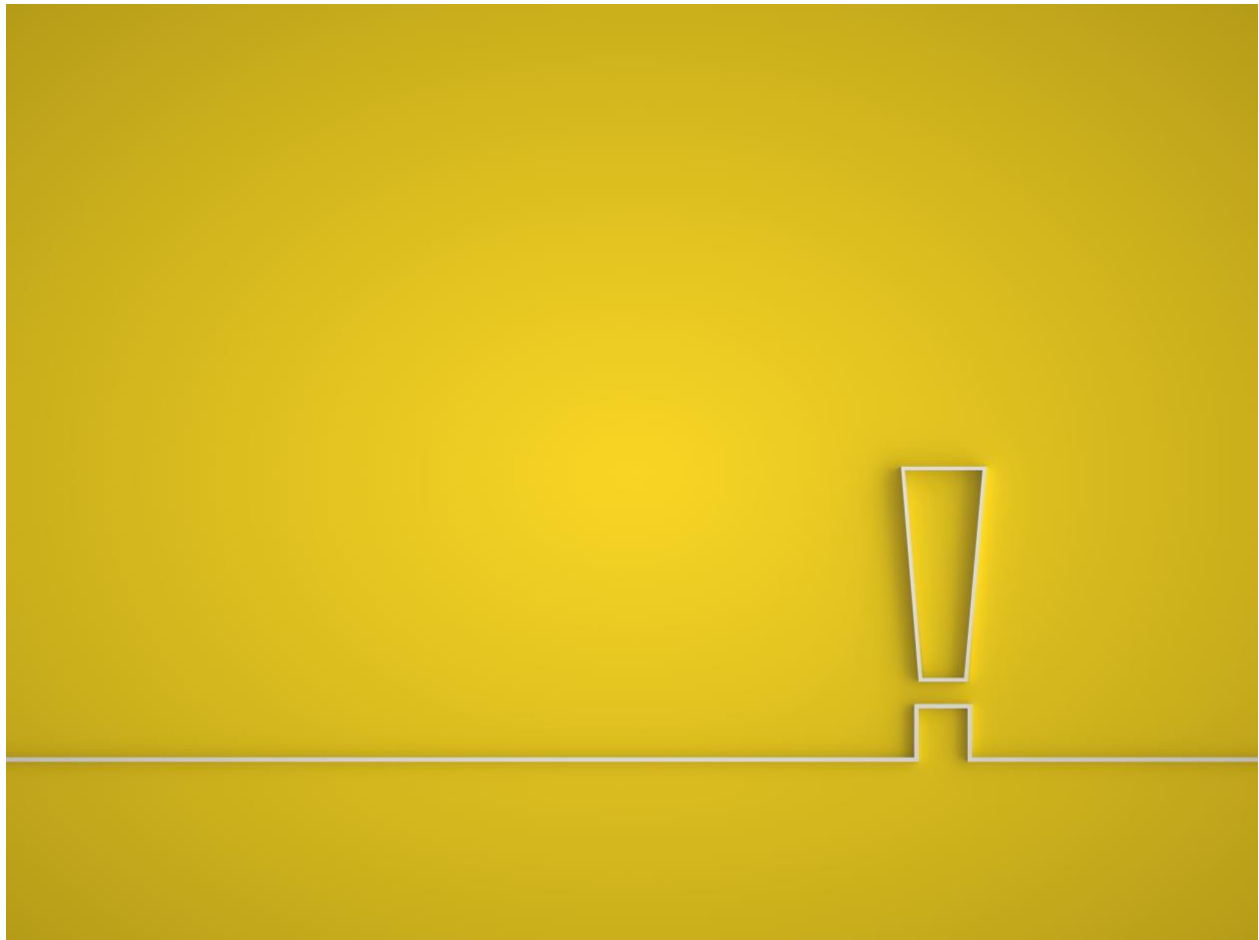
To ensure the company's reputation remains strong and consistent, the following considerations can help safeguard their brand throughout the transition process:

Internal

- Leadership messaging
- Manager alignment
- Morale rebuilding plan

External

- Monitor Glassdoor
- Prepare media statements if needed
- Communicate with clients if needed



Termination/Layoff Planning Worksheets

This section provides tools for consideration to guide leaders through the structured preparation required for employee offboarding:

Employee Impact List

Employee	Role	Tenure	Notice/Severance	Risk Level

Cost Modeling Worksheet

Cost Category	Amount
Statutory Notice	
Severance	
Benefits Continuation	
Outplacement	

Communication Plan Timeline

Stage	Action	Owner	Date

To learn more – [Agilec – Outplacement Services](#)

Book a complementary 20-minute consultation with us.

We offer fully customizable solutions to meet the unique needs of every organization and role, ensuring a smooth and successful transition for all. Connect with us to see how we can support your unique business needs.

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