

Advisory

BILL 33-2023: CHANGES TO PENSION STANDARDS

Date: April 24, 2026
Distribution: Pension Plan Administrators and Service Providers
Advisory Number: 26-016

PURPOSE

BC Financial Services Authority (BCFSA) is notifying interest holders of [Order in Council \(OIC\) No. 153 \(BC Reg 62/2026\)](#), which brings into force amendments made by Bill 33-2023. The amendments made by [Bill 33-2023](#), the *Pension Benefits Standards Amendment Act, 2023* reduce administrative burden, address policy issues, and make technical corrections and clarifications in the *Pension Benefits Standards Act* (PBSA). For more information, download BCFSA's [Advisory 23-040](#) on Bill 33-2023.

Amendments that generally require changes to plan documents become effective on October 30, 2026, while other amendments become effective on April 30, 2026. Amendments in Bill 33-2023 to enable defined contribution plans to offer variable life benefits are not part of this OIC. The OIC also makes related and housekeeping amendments to the Pension Benefits Standards Regulation (PBSR). BCFSA will release regulatory statements at a later date to reflect its interpretation of certain amendments.

SUMMARY OF NOTABLE CHANGES

This section includes some of the noteworthy changes in the OIC and is not intended to be an exhaustive summary of all amendments. Plan administrators are responsible for ensuring that they and/or their designated delegates understand the OIC in full. The following summary highlights the significant amendments:

Effective April 30, 2026

Plans for specified individuals

- The existing exemption for plans for connected persons is expanded to apply to plans with members who are all specified individuals within the meaning of section 8515 (4) (a) or (b), or both, of the Income Tax Regulations (Canada). These plans are exempt from the PBSA and PBSR, except for the provisions set out in section 12 of the PBSR.
- If your plan is registered with BCFSA and it meets the criteria for exemption, please contact pensions@bcfsa.ca.

Solvency funding requirements on termination of a defined benefit component

- The participating employer's terminal funding obligations are clarified, including how overpayments made after plan termination do not constitute surplus.
- There is a new requirement to file annual actuarial reports during the five-year payment period (starting on the second anniversary of the effective date of termination) and to adjust minimum payments based on each report.

Classification: **Protected A**

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Effective October 30, 2026

Auto-enrolment and auto-escalation of member contributions

- Defined contribution plans that automatically enroll members are permitted to provide for automatic escalation of contributions made by those members.
- Notice and opt-out election requirements pertaining to auto-escalation provisions are introduced and requirements pertaining to auto-enrolment provisions are clarified and updated.

Options for pre-retirement survivor benefits

- Surviving spouses of members who die before retirement have the right to choose a pension. The requirements for pre-retirement death benefit statements are updated accordingly.

Options for locked-in transfers

- Locked-in transfers may be made to a locked-in retirement account, life income fund, or annuity.

Discharge for annuity purchase

- The discharge available for annuity purchases for persons entitled to benefits under a defined benefit provision of a pension plan is available, subject to conditions set out in the PBSR, to:
 - active members who are no longer accruing benefits (frozen benefit entitlement); and
 - surviving spouses who are entitled to deceased members' benefits.
- PBSR requirements for employer top-up payments are corrected and updated to reflect the minimum 85 per cent solvency funding requirements.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The specific legal requirements are set out in the PBSA and PBSR. If you have any questions, please email pensions@bcfsa.ca or phone 604-660-3555.