

BCFSA issues a Q&A bulletin for occupational pension plans amid the COVID-19 crisis

On May 27, 2020 the British Columbia Financial Services Authority (BCFSA) issued an information bulletin titled [COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions](#) to address five frequently asked COVID-19 related pension plan questions, such as the option to suspend contributions to defined contribution plans, or to extend the amortization period for benefit formula pension plans.

British Columbia Financial Services Authority (BCFSA)

The BCFSA is an agency of the British Columbia (B.C.) government that regulates pension plans, as well as mortgage brokers, financial institutions, and the Credit Union Deposit Insurance Corporation.

The BCFSA issues information bulletins to provide technical interpretations of the provisions of the [Pension Benefits Standards Act](#) (PBSA), the [Pension Benefits Standards Regulation](#) which regulate occupational pension plans covering B.C. employees. In other words, the legislation also protects B.C. members of pension plans registered in other Canadian provinces.

However, the PBSA does not have jurisdiction over federal public sector pension plans, or plans covering private sector employees working in federally regulated industries (such as the banking, airline, broadcasting and telecommunications industries) or jurisdictions such as Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon.

The BCFSA information bulletin

To protect pension plan members, former members and other beneficiaries and to allow plan administrators to focus their efforts on addressing COVID-19 related challenges the BCFSA information bulletin provides answers to the following five commonly asked questions:

1. Can defined contribution (DC) pension plans suspend contributions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. Can employers remit DC pension plan contributions based on full-time salaries, even where employees are working a reduced schedule?
3. Can benefit formula pension plans extend the amortization period and/or contribution rate remittance deadline?
4. Can a defined benefit (DB) plan administrator restrict the transfer of the commuted value of a member to a solvency ratio lower than that provided in the last filed valuation?
5. Can a member access funds from their Locked-in Retirement Account (LIRA) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?



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The information bulletin indicates that it is a dynamic document that will be updates as warranted.



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For more information on GVISOR™, contact us at +1.202.299.9378 or jana_bixby@ajg.com.
