

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

- *Investment Canada Act.* Recent amendments to the *Investment Canada Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. 28 (1st Supp.) and changes to policy announced by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (the "Minister") continue to address changing threats that can arise from foreign investment.
 - **Modernization.** An Act to Amend the Investment Canada Act, S.C. 2024, c. 4 received Royal Assent on March 22, 2024, with amendments coming into force September 3, 2024. The amendments further the Minister's ability to detect, review, and restrict foreign investments that are potentially injurious to Canadian national security.
 - Investment digital media sector. Foreign investors and Canadian businesses in the investment digital media sector (the "IDM sector") must review their investment plans for potential connections to entities owned or influenced by hostile foreign states and consult with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's Investment Review Division at least 45 days before implementing any investment. Foreign investors in Canada's IDM sector must ensure their investments support the creation and retention of Canadian intellectual property and comply with stringent undertakings and possible reviews for net benefit by the Minister of Canadian Heritage, focusing on maintaining Canadian control and cultural expression.
- Mandatory disclosure regime to report transactions. Enhanced mandatory disclosure rules under ss. 237.3 to 237.4 of the *Income Tax Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. 1 (5th Supp.) consist of changes to the existing reportable transaction rules and a new rule to report "notifiable transactions". These rules apply to transactions occurring after June 21, 2023. Members of the legal profession are caught by the rules through the definition of an "advisor" and are therefore exposed to the possibility of substantial penalties. Legal professionals are currently exempt from the rules pending determination of the Federation of Law Societies' of Canada's challenge to the constitutionality of these rules on the grounds that they infringe the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Part I of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, being Schedule B to the *Canada Act* 1982 (U.K.), c. 11 (specifically, that the rules create potential conflicts of interest between legal professionals and their clients). Other parties, such as clients and accountants, are not exempt from the rules. Lawyers should consider advising their clients to consult with accountants and other professionals, such as tax counsel, on their obligations as well as updating their reporting correspondence.

- Land Owner Transparency Act. The Land Owner Transparency Act, S.B.C. 2019, c. 23 (the "LOTA") requires a transparency declaration, or report (if applicable), to be filed in the new Land Owner Transparency Registry (the "LOTR") any time an application is made to register or transfer an interest in land under the Land Title Act, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 250. A reporting body under the LOTA—which includes most corporations, trusts, and partnerships, subject to limited exemptions—will have to file a transparency report any time there is a change in interest holders or beneficial owners, even if legal title is not transferred. Amendments to the LOTA came into effect November 20, 2023 and include new definitions for "Surveyor of Taxes" and "transferee". The amendments are to enhance the accuracy and completeness of transparency declarations and provide the ability to correct previously filed transparency declarations (s. 10.2), particularly where information was incorrect, or a reporting body was omitted (s. 15.2). Additionally, reporting bodies are now required to file a transparency report within two months after receiving a notification from the Surveyor of Taxes regarding a revested property (s. 15.1). For further information, see the Land Owner Transparency Registry website and also the course presentation and materials by S. Carter, R. Danakody, and C.R. MacDonald, "Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia: Land Owner Transparency Registry", in Residential Real Estate Conference 2020 (CLEBC, 2020), and by R. Danakody and T. Norman, "Land Owner Transparency Registry (LOTR)" in Real Estate Development Update 2021 (CLEBC, 2021), available through CLEBC Courses on Demand.
- **Transparency register.** Private companies incorporated under the *Business Corporations Act*, S.B.C. 2002, c. 57 must create and maintain a "transparency register" of information about "significant individuals" (as defined by s. 119.11 of the *Business Corporations Act*). The *Business Corporations Amendment Act*, 2023, S.B.C. 2023, c. 20 will introduce a new corporate transparency registry and transparency requirements by 2025.
- Canada Business Corporations Act. Amendments to the Canada Business Corporations Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-44 (the "CBCA") which took effect August 31, 2022, require distributing corporations (generally, only public companies governed under the CBCA) to comply with new requirements with respect to the election of directors. Note the amendments in s. 106 of the CBCA, with respect to "majority voting" and "individual election" requirements. Accordingly, if a CBCA company is being incorporated, and particularly if it may become a reporting issuer, attention should be given to the company's articles with respect to electing and appointing its directors. As of January 22, 2024, corporations created under the CBCA are required to file information regarding individuals with significant control ("ISC") with Corporations Canada and to keep a copy of their ISC register with their corporate records.
- **Purpose-built rental exemption.** Effective January 1, 2024, certain new purpose-built rental buildings are exempt from the further 2% property transfer tax applied to residential property values that exceed \$3,000,000 and meet the eligibility requirements.
- **Greenwashing provisions of the** *Competition Act.* The *Competition Act*, R.S.C. 1985. c. C-34 added new provisions that took effect June 20, 2024. The new provisions require companies making environmental claims about their products or services must support these claims with adequate and proper testing. Furthermore, any statements regarding the environmental benefits of a business or its activities must not be substantiated using "internationally recognized methodologies".

OF NOTE

- Aboriginal law. Special considerations apply to businesses involving Indigenous persons and lands belonging to First Nations. While significant tax and other advantages may be available under the *Indian Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. I-5, such advantages are affected by the following: the type of business; transaction nature; business entity (sole proprietorship, partnership, joint venture, trust, or incorporated company); location of business activity (either on or off First Nations lands); and the specific First Nation and its applicable governance. Effective May 11, 2023, the *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2023* came into force, amending the *Treaty First Nation Taxation Act*, S.B.C 2007, c. 38, and the *Nisga'a Final Agreement Act*, S.B.C. 1999, c. 2. These legislative amendments allow taxing treaty First Nations and the Nisga'a nation, respectively, to implement tax exemptions for property on their lands. If the transaction involves First Nations land, consider seeking the advice of a lawyer who has experience in Aboriginal law matters. Further information on Aboriginal law issues is available on the "Aboriginal Law" page on the "Practice Areas" section of the Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia website (www.cle.bc.ca) and in other CLEBC publications. See also *Negotiating & Structuring Business Transactions with First Nations 2011* (CLEBC, 2011).
- Money laundering—companies, trusts and other entities. As a means of laundering money, • criminals use ordinary legal instruments (such as shell and numbered companies, bare trusts, and nominees) in the attempt to disguise the true owners of real property, the beneficial owners. These efforts can be hard to detect. As such, lawyers must assess the facts and context of the proposed retainer and financial transactions. Lawyers should be aware of red flags, and if a lawyer has doubts or suspicions about whether they could be assisting in any dishonesty, crime, or fraud, they should make enough inquiries to determine whether it is appropriate to act and make a record of the results of their inquiries (BC Code rules 3.2-7 and 3.2-8 and Law Society Rules 3-103(4), 3-109, and 3-110). See the anti-money laundering resources on the Law Society's "Client ID & Verification" webpage, including: "Forming Companies and Other Structures-Managing the Risk"; "Source of Money FAQs"; Risk Assessment Case Studies for the Legal Profession; "Red Flags Quick Reference Guide"; "Risk Advisories for the Legal Profession"; and free online Law Society and Federation of Law Societies of Canada online courses. Also see the Discipline Advisories (an updated list can be found at www.lawsociety.bc.ca/for-lawyers/discipline-advisories/), which include topics such as Client ID and Verification, Country/geographic risk, and Private lending. Lawyers may contact a Law Society practice advisor at practiceadvice@lsbc.org for a consultation about the applicable BC Code rules and Law Society Rules and obtain guidance.
- Law Society of British Columbia. For changes to the Law Society Rules and other Law Society updates and issues "of note", see LAW SOCIETY NOTABLE UPDATES LIST (A-3). Note in particular the commentary on fraud prevention, bank holds on trust funds, and all other matters that may be relevant to purchase and sale transactions.
- Additional resources. For further information about asset purchase procedures, see *Advising British Columbia Businesses* (CLEBC, 2006–); *Buying and Selling a Business: Annotated Precedents* (CLEBC, 2000–); *British Columbia Personal Property Security Act Practice Manual* (CLEBC, 1995–); and the *Due Diligence Deskbook* (CLEBC, 1994–).

CONTENTS

- 1. Initial Contact
- 2. Initial Interview
- 3. After the Initial Interview
- 4. Drafting the Agreement
- 5. Prior to Closing
- 6. Closing
- 7. Post Closing

1.	INITIAL CONTACT	
1.1	Arrange the initial interview.	
1.2	Ask the client to bring to the initial interview all available financial and operational information on the target company and vendor, particularly financial statements, annual reports, prospectuses, press releases, list of assets, contracts, leases, government permits, etc. Where information is not available, consider how it will be obtained.	
1.3	Conduct a conflicts of interest check. Refer to the CLIENT FILE OPENING AND CLOSING (A-2) checklist.	
1.4	Confirm compliance with Law Society Rules 3-98 to 3-110 for client identification and verification and source of money for financial transactions and complete the CLIENT IDENTIFICATION, VERIFICATION, AND SOURCE OF MONEY PROCEDURE (A-1) checklist. Consider periodic monitoring requirements (Law Society Rule 3-110).	

2.	INITIAL INTERVIEW	
2.1	Discuss the terms of your retainer and the calculation of your fee. Refer to the CLIENT FILE OPENING AND CLOSING (A-2) checklist. Clarify your role in the transaction and that of other advisors to the client. Make it clear for whom you are acting (in particular, if there is more than one purchaser). If acting for more than one party, ensure that you comply with the <i>Code of Professional Conduct for British Columbia</i> (the " <i>BC Code</i> ") rules 3.4-5 to 3.4-9 regarding joint retainers, and refer to item 2.4 in the CLIENT FILE OPENING AND CLOSING (A-2) checklist. If you are acting for a company, unless acting under a joint retainer, be clear that you are acting for the company and not for individuals associated with the company, such as the shareholders or directors (<i>BC Code</i> , rule 3.2-3). Urge others, in writing, to get independent legal representation. Make it clear that you are not protecting their interests and that you are acting exclusively in the interests of your client (<i>BC Code</i> , rule 7.2-9).	

2.2	Determine whether the client has already reached an agreement with the vendor concerning the general terms of the transaction. If not:	
	.1 Advise the client regarding the possibility of structuring the transaction as a share purchase (if appropriate in the circumstances). Consider the tax consequences of purchasing assets versus purchasing shares, and consider discussing same with the client's accountant.	
	.2 Consider signing a confidentiality agreement to allow negotiations to commence. If the client and vendor are competitors, consider safe-guards in sharing competitively sensitive information. Sharing competitively sensitive information can be problematic, particularly if the transaction fails to close. Consider the implications of the <i>Competition Act</i> , R.S.C. 1985, c. C-34.	
2.3	Determine the client's objectives and why the client wants to complete this transaction. Will it be integrated into an existing business? Assess any impact on the client's existing business, if relevant. Seek to determine specific risks and regulatory requirements that may be of concern to the purchaser.	
2.4	Consider the name under which the business will be conducted post-closing to determine due diligence of trademarks and other intellectual property.	
2.5	Review financial statements and other information with the client, the client's accountant, and tax advisor (assuming you are not providing tax advice).	
2.6	Determine the principal elements of the transaction: who is buying what from whom, and for how much? How does the client intend to finance the transaction? Are there any conditions to be met before the deal can proceed (e.g., regulatory approvals)? Are there any third-party consents or assignments that need to be obtained (e.g., landlord's consent to an assignment of lease)? Are there any unusual restrictions, covenants, or conditions that are important? Does the business being conducted by the company involve any particular risks (e.g., environmental), and how are these risks to be allocated between the purchaser and the vendor? Are there any special or unusual procedures that need to be followed (e.g., consultation with Indigenous groups)? Consider the use of any restrictive covenant against the vendor and the target, and its enforceability.	
2.7	Review any tax implications of the transaction:	
	.1 Consider the applicability of PST/GST and input tax credits.	
2.8	If you are not in a position to act, advise the client. Make a record of the advice given, and file your notes. Send a non-engagement letter (for samples, see the Law Society website at <u>www.lawsociety.bc.ca/Website/media/Shared/docs/practice/resources/Ltrs-NonEngagement.pdf</u> (PDF)).	

3.	AFTER THE INITIAL INTERVIEW	
3.1	Confirm your retainer. Refer to the CLIENT FILE OPENING AND CLOSING (A-2) checklist. Confirm compliance with Law Society Rules 3-98 to 3-110 on client identification and verification (see item 1.4 in this checklist).	

3.2	If the client is a company, verify who has the authority to give instructions (<i>BC Code</i> , rule 3.2-3 Commentary [1]). Consider having a directors' resolution confirm your retainer and giving one officer or director the authority to instruct you.	
3.3	If the client has not reached a tentative agreement with the vendor, draft a letter of intent outlining the transaction in clear terms. Consider whether the client wishes the letter of intent (or any parts of it) to be binding. Review the letter with the client to ensure that it reflects their intentions. Forward the letter to the vendor. Negotiate, if so instructed.	
3.4	Finalize the arrangements regarding financing, if any, if so instructed.	
3.5	Initiate the necessary searches to complete the due diligence for the transaction and, where necessary, obtain written authorization from the vendor and its shareholders for release of information and the relevant government account numbers (note: certain searches may vary for federally regulated undertakings even if operated only in British Columbia). Consider in particular the following:	
	.1 Corporate Registry (or equivalent office in jurisdiction of incorporation). Search for memorandum (where still applicable), notice of articles, articles, and any amendments; registered and records offices; annual reports; directors and officers; whether the company has been struck off and subsequently restored; copies of encumbrances which may still bind the company; order certificate of good standing; check that there is no notice of dissent pursuant to s. 301 of the <i>Business Corporations Act</i> , S.B.C. 2002, c. 57.	
	.2 Personal Property Registry.	
	.3 ICBC Vehicle Records Department.	
	.4 Land Title Office. Search for judgments; title; copies of charges and permitted encumbrances; copies of leases and restrictive covenants; other relevant information.	
	 (a) Consider searching Land Owner Transparency Registry (see "Land Owner Transparency Act" and "Transparency Register" under "New developments" in this checklist). 	
	.5 Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada).	
	.6 Canadian Securities Registration Systems. Search for security under the <i>Bank Act</i> , S.C. 1991, c. 46, s. 427.	
	.7 Canada Revenue Agency:	
	(a) Income tax re: source deductions and corporate or personal income tax.	
	(b) GST/HST. Also consider GST registration for your client.	
	.8 B.C. Ministry of Finance: PST and Employer Health Tax. Coordinate necessary logistics to obtain a PST clearance certificate.	
	.9 WorkSafeBC: Assessment Division and Prevention Division.	
	.10 Employment Standards Branch.	

	.11 Human Rights Tribunal.	
	.12 Labour Relations Board. Search for pending certifications, collective agreements, or any disputes before the Board involving the target company.	
	.13 Other searches as required, depending on the nature of the business of the company (e.g., Mineral Titles Online, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Canadian Register of Vessels (Commercial and Pleasure Craft), Small Vessel Register (Commercial)).	
	.14 Insurance agent (confirming placement of adequate insurance).	
	.15 Municipal offices. Search for taxes and utilities; planning department; licences and permits; fire inspector; health inspector; zoning and restrictive bylaws.	
	.16 Court registry search re: actions commenced against the vendor and/or its shareholders (consider which registries to search).	
	.17 Sheriff's offices for writs of executions.	
	.18 Environmental matters: environment ministries (federal and provincial), Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Contaminated Site Registry. Consider having an environmental audit conducted.	
	.19 Canadian Intellectual Property Office (patents, trademarks, copyrights, etc.).	
	.20 Consider searching the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (<u>www.cira.ca</u>); perform domain name due diligence.	
	.21 Review the <i>Due Diligence Deskbook</i> (CLEBC, 1994–) for other possibly relevant searches and the appropriate scope of the searches.	
3.6	Review all material contracts, including leases and licences, and permits to be assigned, and consider whether consents to assignment are required.	
3.7	Consider consulting a tax expert.	
3.8	Consider the impacts on the transaction of the <i>Family Law Act</i> , S.B.C. 2011, c. 25 (or, if applicable, the former legislation, <i>Family Relations Act</i> , R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 128); <i>Investment Canada Act</i> , R.S.C. 1985, c. 28 (1st Supp.); <i>Competition Act</i> , R.S.C. 1985, c. C-34 (i.e., regarding mergers and notifiable transactions); and other relevant legislation.	
3.9	Open a document file and retain successive drafts of the agreement. Open a separate sub-file for each major document required in the transaction.	

4. DRAFTING THE AGREEMENT

4.1 Before drafting the agreement, prepare a timetable and a draft of the closing agenda that will act as a reminder of what is required in the transaction and when. See *Buying and Selling a Business: Annotated Precedents* (CLEBC, 2000–) for a sample closing agenda for an asset purchase transaction.

4.2	Prepare an outline of the document. The ASSET PURCHASE AGREEMENT DRAFTING (B-2) checklist may serve as a basis for the document.	
4.3	Prepare the first draft.	
4.4	Review the first draft for coherence and continuity. Go over the first draft with the client to ensure that it expresses the client's intentions.	
4.5	When you and the client are satisfied with the agreement, send it to the vendor or their lawyer for comment and changes.	
4.6	Note changes to the agreement during the course of negotiation in some readily discernible manner.	
4.7	Do not alter the document without indicating the changes to the vendor's lawyer.	
4.8	When negotiations conclude, prepare the final agreement and check to ensure that the document reflects the transaction as it has been formulated.	
4.9	Arrange for signing of the agreement.	

5.	PRIOR TO CLOSING	
5.1	Prepare or obtain all the necessary documentation (for additional considerations, see the ASSET PURCHASE AGREEMENT DRAFTING (B-2) checklist), including:	
	.1 Conveyancing documents with respect to the transfer of real property interests. Note the obligation to maintain the security of the digital signature. Password entry is required each time a lawyer signs an electronic document. The offence provision under s. 168.7(2) of the <i>Land Title Act</i> , R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 250, the Juricert terms and conditions, Law Society Rule 3-96.1, and <i>BC Code</i> rule 6.1-5 prohibit lawyers from permitting others to use their personalized encrypted electronic access to register documents or from disclosing to others, including support staff, the password or access phrase or number.	
	.2 Bill of sale for chattels and other personal property.	
	.3 Assignment of contracts.	
	.4 Transfer forms for licensed vehicles, registered vessels.	
	.5 Assignment of receivables.	
	.6 Assignment of intangible property, such as trademarks, patents, goodwill, etc.	
	.7 Third-party consents as necessary, especially re: franchises, leases, licences, all contracts essential to operate the business, etc.	
	.8 Releases of encumbrances not assumed by client.	
	.9 Certified extract of a resolution of the vendor company's directors authorizing the execution, delivery, and implementation of the agreement.	

.10	Certified extract of special resolution of members of the vendor company pursuant to <i>Business Corporations Act</i> , s. 301(1), if required.
.11	Resolution of the purchaser's directors authorizing the transaction.
.12	Assumption agreements, confirmation of outstanding balances, and other covenants and assurances required to procure releases with respect to liabilities or indebtedness being assumed.
.13	Certified copies of insurance policies with transfer and consent forms duly endorsed (if applicable).
.14	Tax remittances (confirm obligation for and timing of payment):
	(a) Certified cheque payable to the Minister of Finance for applicable PST in respect of tax payable on the transaction, together with an appropriate remittance form.
	(b) Calculation of federal GST payable on closing, if an election under <i>Excise Tax Act</i> , R.S.C. 1985, c. E-15, s. 167, is not used.
	(c) Calculation of property transfer tax payable on closing of a conveyance of real property. (Note the additional property transfer tax applicable to foreign entities pursuant to s. 2.02 of the <i>Property Transfer Tax Act</i> , R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 378. The taxable amount is 20% for property transfers of residential properties on or after February 21, 2018, in the Capital Regional District, Fraser Valley Regional District, Regional District of Central Okanagan, and Regional District of Nanaimo. See "Purpose-built rental exemption" in "New developments" in this checklist.
.15	Extraprovincial registration pursuant to the <i>Business Corporations Act</i> (where the purchaser is a foreign corporation intending to carry on business in British Columbia).
.16	Statements of adjustments.
.17	Certificate pursuant to <i>Income Tax Act</i> , R.S.C. 1985, c. 1 (5th Supp.), s. 116 (regarding tax to be withheld by purchaser if the vendor is not a resident of Canada).
.18	Security documents and financing statements under the <i>Personal Property Security Act</i> , R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 359, if required.
.19	Employment contracts, if required.
.20	Non-competition and confidentiality agreements.
.21	Banking arrangements.
.22	Opinion of the vendor's lawyer. Consider including that the vendor is duly incorporated, validly existing, and in good standing, and all necessary steps and corporate proceedings have been taken to validate the transfer of assets, the agreement has been duly executed and delivered, and is a legal, valid, and binding obligation, enforceable against the vendor. Consider opinions specific to the transaction (see statements and opinions of the Solicitors' Legal Opinions

	Committee at <u>www.cle.bc.ca/solicitors-legal-opinions</u> /. See also <i>Advising British</i> <i>Columbia Businesses</i> (CLEBC, 2006–), chapter 7 (Legal Opinions in Business Transactions).	
	.23 Evidence of appropriate filings under the <i>Investment Canada Act</i> , the <i>Competition Act</i> , and any other required regulatory consents.	
	.24 Excise Tax Act, s. 167 election regarding GST exemption, if applicable.	
	.25 Income Tax Act, s. 22 election regarding accounts receivable exemption, if applicable.	
	.26 Name change documents for the vendor, if applicable.	
5.2	Ensure that the conditions of the client's obligation to close have been satisfied.	
5.3	Complete the financial arrangements.	
5.4	Prepare the final draft of the closing agenda.	
5.5	Gather together the documents needed for closing.	
5.6	Update searches for closing.	
5.7	Remind the client to arrange insurance on the assets being purchased, and that the insurance should take effect when (or before) the risk passes.	
5.8	Consider application of the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act, S.C. 2000, c. 17.	
5.9	Consider timing and management of funds (payment by wire transfers, lawyers' trust accounts, Law Society trust administration fee, etc.). Use directions to pay as necessary. With regard to wire transfers, see Law Society Rules 3-64.1 and 3-64.2 and the <i>Trust Accounting Handbook</i> at www.lawsociety.bc.ca/docs/trust/Trust-Accounting-Handbook.pdf (PDF).	

6.	CLOSING	
6.1	Ensure that all the conditions of closing are satisfied.	
6.2	Ensure that each party receives the appropriate documents.	
6.3	Transfer the property and pay the purchase price and all applicable taxes.	
6.4	Obtain acknowledgment in writing from each party that all conditions of closing have been satisfied or waived.	

6.5 Complete filings at the Land Title Office as necessary in respect of real property interests; note and attend to the requirements of the *LOTA*, where applicable (see "*Land Owner Transparency Act*" and "Transparency register" under "New developments" in this checklist). Register any financing statements and financing change statements that require registration at the Personal Property Registry. Do these registrations on or before closing, if possible.

7.	POST-CLOSING	
7.1	Send copies of insurance policies to encumbrance holders, as required.	
7.2	Remit GST if <i>Excise Tax Act</i> , s. 221(1), applies, or file applicable s. 167 election form subject to eligibility. Remit applicable self-assessed PST.	
7.3	Prepare a reporting letter and account as soon as practicable after closing. Forward the brief of documents to the client and indicate those matters requiring further action on the part of the client. Alternatively or additionally, advise the client to review the documents to determine what further action is required. Consider including a "post closing" section in the closing agenda, setting out all post-closing matters (e.g., filings, registrations, deferred payments, press releases), and the party responsible for each matter.	
7.4	Diarize any key post-closing dates and communicate applicable dates to the client and other advisors.	
7.5	Remind the client to file tax elections in time (they must be filed within the regular reporting period in which the closing falls), and advise the client to confirm with their tax advisor what filings are required.	
7.6	Close the file. See the CLIENT FILE OPENING AND CLOSING (A-2) checklist.	