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2026 Quebec Construction Holidays: Dates and Impacts

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Executive Summary

Quebec's **construction holidays** are a mandatory twice-yearly period during which nearly the entire construction industry shuts down its worksites. In 2026, the statutory **summer shutdown** will run from **July 19 to August 1, 2026**, while the **winter shutdown** will take place from **December 20, 2026 to January 2, 2027** (workingdaycalculator.ca) (www.apchq.com). These dates, set by government decree and incorporated into collective agreements, mean that approximately **80% of construction workers** will stop working simultaneously (www.ccq.org) (montreal.citynews.ca). This large-scale break, introduced in 1971 to better

coordinate the many trades on worksites (montreal.citynews.ca), has **major impacts** on both businesses (project planning, contractual schedules, human resource management) and workers (synchronized rest, **compensation**, safety).

Businesses in the sector must plan ahead to avoid **costly delays**: one-third of worksites experience delays because of inadequate preparation (www.emploisenconstruction.com). Managers face the decision of shutting down their worksite completely or using exceptions (emergency work, limited maintenance) governed by collective agreements (www.acqconstruire.com) (www.tvanouvelles.ca). Without this planning, the consequences can be serious (contractual penalties, financial costs, loss of staff motivation) (www.emploisenconstruction.com). For staff, this period represents mandatory paid leave, funded by two annual vacation cheques issued by the CCQ (www.ccq.org) (montreal.citynews.ca). However, it coincides with increased risks (road accidents, drownings) during the mass summer travel period (www.emploisenconstruction.com).

This report examines in detail the historical origins of the construction holidays, their legal framework, the 2026 dates, and their economic and social ramifications. It also analyses case studies (hospitality, **tourism**, major projects) and compares this Quebec tradition with other practices (e.g., the Dutch “bouwwakvakantie”). Finally, it discusses the future prospects of the system, assessing issues related to labour shortages and changes in tradition.

Introduction and Context

The **construction holidays** are a distinctive Quebec practice dating back to the late 1960s. Through a provincial government decree tabled in 1970, the province standardized mandatory annual leave in the construction industry (montreal.citynews.ca). Since the summer of 1971, building and civil engineering workers have therefore had two weeks of simultaneous vacation in midsummer (montreal.citynews.ca). This measure, incorporated into collective agreements since its creation, was introduced to address misunderstandings and disruptions and the difficulty of coordinating all the trades (bricklayers, electricians, carpenters, etc.) on the same worksite (montreal.citynews.ca) (journalmetro.com). As Johanne Brunet, spokesperson for the Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ), points out, “[this] ensures better coordination on worksites between the different trades, thereby maintaining the pace of work,” and allows for optimized “work synergy” (montreal.citynews.ca).

Originally, the system provided for two weeks of leave in summer and one week in winter. A 1980 decree added a second week during the holiday season (journalmetro.com), bringing the total to **four mandatory weeks annually** for most workers covered by a collective agreement. The exact dates of these shutdowns (scheduled in July for summer and late December for winter) are set uniformly each year. For example, according to the Commission de la construction, mandatory summer leave for 2025 begins on *Sunday, July 20 at 12:01 a.m.* and ends on *Saturday, August 2 at midnight* (www.ccq.org) (www.apchq.com). This institutionalized system is managed by the CCQ, which, in addition to coordinating the dates, issues two vacation cheques annually to each worker concerned (www.ccq.org).

Quebec's construction industry is a major sector of the provincial economy. According to the federal government's sectoral profile (Job Bank), it accounts for approximately 7% of Quebec employment and more than 6% of GDP (www.jobbank.gc.ca) (www.jobbank.gc.ca). It employs hundreds of thousands of people — approximately **344,000** in total across the province (www.qub.ca) — and is currently experiencing strong demand for [infrastructure](#) and housing. In this context, a coordinated interruption such as the construction holidays has a significant effect on the sector's activity. For example, it is estimated that in 2024 nearly **193,000** workers will receive their vacation pay deposit (www.journaldequebec.com), representing a large share of the workforce (the CCQ also reports “nearly 200,000 workers” on leave for summer 2024 (www.journaldequebec.com)). This system differs from the rest of Canada, where businesses freely set their own vacation weeks. As a Canadian engineering firm observes, “most provinces let contractors manage their own holiday schedule; Quebec does not: the CCQ requires almost the entire industry to stop twice a year” (workingdaycalculator.ca). An Ontario or American company signing a contract with Quebec timelines must therefore account for two blackout weeks each summer and winter in its planning (workingdaycalculator.ca).

In summary, the 2026 construction holidays are part of a long tradition of mandatory leave supported by regulations and collective agreements, affecting a significant share of Quebec's economy. For this year, the official dates and the scope of the measure are already known and must be incorporated into businesses' work schedules. The following analysis examines these dates, but above all the consequences (positive, negative or neutral) for businesses and workers during these mandatory shutdowns.

Dates and Regulatory Framework for Mandatory Leave

2026 Construction Holiday Dates

In 2026, the construction sector will shut down for two weeks in midsummer and two weeks in winter. According to the official calendars, the **2026 summer break** will begin on **Sunday, July 19, 2026 at 12:01 a.m.** and end on **Saturday, August 1, 2026 at midnight** (workingdaycalculator.ca) (www.apchq.com). The **2026–2027 winter break** will take place from **Monday, December 20, 2026 to Sunday, January 2, 2027** (workingdaycalculator.ca) (www.apchq.com). These periods are set each year within the industry by the CCQ (Commission de la construction du Québec) and employer associations.

In practice, summer leave takes place during the last two full weeks of July (beginning on the 3rd Sunday of the month) (workingdaycalculator.ca). For example, the 2024 dates ran from July 21 to August 3 (www.acqconstruire.com), those for 2025 from July 20 to August 2 (www.apchq.com), and those for 2026 from July 19 to August 1 (workingdaycalculator.ca) (www.apchq.com). The table below summarizes recent years and the near-term projections:

Year	Summer holidays (inclusive)	Winter holidays (inclusive)
2024	July 21 – August 3, 2024 (www.acqconstruire.com)	Dec. 21, 2024 – Jan. 3, 2025 (traditional)

Year	Summer holidays (inclusive)	Winter holidays (inclusive)
2025	July 20 – August 2, 2025 (www.apchq.com)	Dec. 21, 2025 – Jan. 3, 2026 (www.apchq.com)
2026	July 19 – August 1, 2026 (workingdaycalculator.ca) (www.apchq.com)	Dec. 20, 2026 – Jan. 2, 2027 (www.apchq.com)
2027	July 25 – August 7, 2027 (www.apchq.com)	Dec. 20, 2027 – Jan. 1, 2028 (projected)

Source: CCQ / ACSQ (Association de la construction et du bâtiment du Québec) (www.apchq.com) (workingdaycalculator.ca).

These official dates appear in the industry's collective agreements and apply to nearly all worksites in the province. Only a few highly specific worksites (see the next section) may maintain minimal activity under strict conditions. In any event, from July 19 to August 1, 2026, the vast majority of crews and worksites will be shut down (www.acqconstruire.com) (www.tvanouvelles.ca).

Legal Basis and Institutional Framework

Mandatory annual construction holidays are defined by **Act R-20** (the act governing labour relations in construction) and the trades' collective agreements. The CCQ oversees their application. The CCQ website clearly states that “the dates of statutory holidays and mandatory annual leave are determined in the collective agreements” (www.ccq.org). In other words, this is a contractual system negotiated by unions and employers, but made universal by the initial ministerial decree.

Each year, the CCQ publishes an official competitive calendar specifying these summer and winter holidays precisely. The CCQ's 2025 information bulletin states, for example: *“This year, the construction holidays officially run from Sunday, July 20 at 12:01 a.m. to Saturday, August 2 at midnight. Approximately 80% of the industry's workers and employers will enjoy a well-deserved rest”* (www.ccq.org). This means that the vast majority of the industry is affected. The CCQ also issues two vacation cheques per year to all eligible employees, giving tangible form to this entitlement (known as a “vacation cheque”) (www.ccq.org) (montreal.citynews.ca).

The rules governing mandatory leave provide for very limited exceptions. First, certain maintenance, repair or routine “upkeep” work may be carried out during these periods (“in the normal course of the company's business,” with the employee's consent), up to a maximum of 40 hours paid at the regular rate (straight time) (www.acqconstruire.com). Second, **emergency** work (imminent danger to people or risk of property damage on a worksite) remains permitted, provided the employee volunteers and receives premium pay (often double time) (www.acqconstruire.com) (amcq.qc.ca). Finally, the light residential sector allows, in certain cases, an agreement to be approved in advance to work during the break (mandatory notice, documented in writing) (www.apchq.com). In isolated urban areas (Baie-James and north of the 55th parallel), the legislation provides that no shutdown is required: these worksites may operate full-time even in the middle of July (www.acqconstruire.com).

Impacts on Businesses

The construction holidays impose an almost industry-wide interruption of business activities for two weeks in summer (and again in winter). These coordinated interruptions require firms to adjust their project management, staffing and day-to-day operations. Here, we examine in detail the main implications for businesses in the sector (and worksites).

Project Planning and Schedules

As soon as the dates are announced, businesses must review and recalibrate their work plans. **Contractual deadlines** are directly affected by the loss of two weeks of production. As a specialist article points out, *“if your deadline said ‘delivery by July 31,’ you actually lose two weeks of working time because of these holidays”* (workingdaycalculator.ca). In other words, a project scheduled for completion in late July will need its deadline pushed back to August or a major acceleration beforehand. Indeed, failing to account for this break is a major cause of delays: a best practices guide written by HR experts finds that **1 worksite in 3** experiences delays because of inadequate advance human resource planning (www.emploisenconstruction.com).

To limit negative impacts, managers have the choice (within permitted limits) of **shutting down completely** during the statutory period or, alternatively, maintaining activity for certain eligible work (see below). These decisions must take several factors into account: ongoing contracts (penalty clauses, legal deadlines), worksite complexity, subcontractor and supplier availability, etc. Without an adequate strategy, the consequences can be serious: not only **financial penalties** (delivery delays subject to penalty clauses, compensation payable), but also “loss of team motivation and a tarnished image among clients” (www.emploisenconstruction.com). A poor decision can also affect profitability: if a business chooses to operate with a reduced crew, hourly costs for emergency work or management during the holiday period (premiums of up to 150–200%) will climb.

Several guidelines are recommended to reduce these disruptions. For example, as early as May–June before the break, it is suggested that businesses “identify worksites that can be paused without contractual penalties, establish the post-holiday availability of critical resources and stagger managers' leave to ensure minimal supervision” (www.emploisenconstruction.com). In practice, this means planning wind-down stages (pouring the final slabs, preparing for the interruption) and preparing technical documents in advance (detailed plans, material orders). Those responsible stress the importance of **advance planning**: “Vacation planning is not optional; it is a logistical and legal obligation. Yet 1 worksite in 3 experiences delays because an effective HR plan was not prepared in advance” (www.emploisenconstruction.com).

In summary, the summer shutdown represents a planned “blockage” in project calendars, and businesses must systematically adjust their deadlines and resources accordingly. These adjustments are an integral part of project management in Quebec: indeed, the two weeks of holidays are said to create a “*black hole*” in schedules (the “deadline black hole” (workingdaycalculator.ca) (workingdaycalculator.ca)) that must be accounted for when preparing any construction estimate or schedule in Quebec.

Workforce and Human Resources

The second major implication concerns human resources. Nearly all workers and employees in the sector take this leave simultaneously. As the CCQ reported, approximately **80% of workers** in the industry will cease all activity during these periods (www.ccq.org). The remaining 20% consist mainly of administrative staff, mobile emergency crews or the few volunteer workers remaining on worksites, subject to premium pay and special agreements.

Businesses must therefore organize the mass departure and return of workers. In particular, they must pay vacation allowances (150 hours of annual pay) in advance. In practice, most employees receive their **vacation cheque** a few days before the break begins (montreal.citynews.ca). For example, in July 2024, the CCQ indicated that **approximately 193,065 workers** would receive this amount to cover their summer leave (www.journaldequebec.com). This means that even those who work on the last business day of June receive a payment covering the two weeks in July.

For employees, these weeks therefore amount to paid leave. From the company's perspective, this represents a direct cost (wages paid during inactivity) and, at the same time, the need to **replan the allocation of annual hours**. Managers must also account for the resumption of activity upon return: the relative loss of staff motivation must be managed (meetings to get back to work, catching up on training, etc.). From a health and safety perspective, the period also brings increased risks: Austrian mobilization and the mass return lead to more travel accidents. An industry survey indicates that during the 2023 construction holidays, the Sûreté du Québec recorded **13 suspected road deaths**, owing to the large number of trips during these two weeks (www.emploisenconstruction.com). In addition, prolonged exposure to summer heat during the last weeks of July increases accumulated fatigue, requiring additional preventive measures (hydration, breaks in the shade) on worksites before the holidays and upon return.

Overall, for workers, the industry shutdown creates particular payroll planning requirements (double vacation payments), a mass effect on summer travel (road safety), and a psychological effect: the “long-awaited break” is viewed positively as a well-earned respite, but it also imposes a rapid sequence of holidays and returns that can affect team motivation (www.emploisenconstruction.com) (www.tvanouvelles.ca). However, employees who work exceptionally (emergencies or volunteer staff) receive their vacation pay as usual, without mandatory additional wages (www.tvanouvelles.ca), which may limit the appeal of maintaining operations.

Permitted Work (Exemptions)

Although the interruption is widespread, the legislation and collective agreements specify very narrow exceptions under which work may continue. These cases are intended to allow only what is strictly necessary: public safety, unforeseen emergencies, critical equipment or unavoidable contractual obligations.

- **Emergency work:** Any serious threat to public safety or risk of property damage caused by a site shutdown is considered an emergency. In this case, work may be carried out if workers volunteer to do it, and they are then paid at a premium rate (for example, double pay (www.acqconstruire.com)). It is not necessary to notify the CCQ in this case. For example, repairing hydraulic equipment with a potentially fatal defect or restoring power to a malfunctioning bridge would be permitted in July (www.acqconstruire.com).

- **Maintenance and repairs:** Normal preventive or corrective maintenance operations (machine repairs, inspections, minor maintenance work) are tolerated up to a limit of 40 hours of work per employee, if the employee agrees (www.acqconstruire.com) (amcq.qc.ca). This rule applies only if these hours are part of the company's normal operations and do not extend to forced overtime. For example, a contractor may use the break to check cranes, pumps and tools, provided that 40 hours are paid and workers' explicit consent is obtained (www.acqconstruire.com) (amcq.qc.ca).
- **Ongoing light renovation projects:** Certain collective agreements allow holidays to be moved (postponed or brought forward) for a given worksite if all unionized workers on the site consent through a written agreement (www.acqconstruire.com). This allows a small crew to make progress on a less complex residential worksite (minimal area, small crew) if everyone agrees. Advance notice by June 1 is required (see APCHQ (www.apchq.com)).
- **Isolated worksites:** Work in Baie-James and north of the 55th parallel is completely excluded from the system: no shutdown is imposed there (www.acqconstruire.com). These isolated regions continue throughout the year without a break, since the workforce is limited and conditions are unusual.

As a result, certain specific worksites or sectors may continue limited activity during the summer break. For example, urgent roadwork, repairs to essential pipelines or some civil engineering projects falling behind schedule may be carried out. However, in the vast majority of cases (large urban worksites, new buildings, planned infrastructure), the interruption is complete. As the popular expression puts it: *“the orange cones are often even set out during the break,”* but longer-term worksites wait.

Financial Management and Cash Flow

The coordinated shutdown also affects businesses' finances. During these two weeks, businesses normally pay **regular wages**, without billing for work, which amounts to financing idle hours. They must therefore ensure they have sufficient working capital to pay wages (particularly vacation cheques) and maintain fixed expenses (insurance, taxes, rent, etc.) without incoming revenue.

The legislation also provides that even employees who work (rare emergency cases) still receive their vacation allowance as though they were on holiday (www.tvanouvelles.ca). In other words, there is no double payment: these hours worked do not generate an additional day of leave later; the business therefore bears a fixed wage cost over the period for everyone. To compensate, businesses can plan to bill more before or after the period. Nevertheless, certain public contracts or grants do not allow extra time, which can be costly if the schedule slips.

Finally, the allocation of vacation cheque transfers (approximately 150 hours of pay per worker) acts somewhat like an annual wage subsidy. Each summer, the CCQ estimates the total amount distributed — for example, **647 million dollars** in 2024 (montreal.citynews.ca) — that circulates before the shutdown. These voluntary amounts support workers' purchasing power and may partially offset the decline in domestic economic activity (tourism, for example, benefits).

Examples and Case Studies

It is instructive to consider a few examples illustrating these dynamics:

- **Hospitality and tourism:** Since approximately 200,000 workers are on leave simultaneously (montreal.citynews.ca) (www.journaldequebec.com), this creates a peak in travel to Quebec's tourist regions (Mauricie, Laurentides, etc.). A quick survey by the **Quebec Hotel Association** (AHQ) in July 2025 reveals that 60% of hoteliers observed **lower** bookings compared with the previous year (22% higher, 18% unchanged) during this period (www.staymagazine.ca). Average booking rates were around 70% in the first week and 64% in the second week of the holidays (www.staymagazine.ca). The main conclusion is that Quebec's tourism industry adjusts its promotions: the “Come Hug It Out” marketing campaign aimed to attract travellers, particularly local and American visitors, during these holidays (www.staymagazine.ca). This case highlights that, for certain businesses (hotels, restaurants), the worksite shutdown instead represents an **economic opportunity** (more regional customers) rather than a disadvantage, although the effect varies by region (Gaspésie reached 80–90% occupancy in July–August 2025 (www.staymagazine.ca)).
- **Suppliers and subcontractors:** Businesses supplying materials (concrete, steel, wood) must also adapt. Many accelerate deliveries for ongoing contracts before July 19. For example, cement plants typically schedule extra production shifts in June to stockpile ready-mix concrete on worksites. Other suppliers choose to **close their production sites or offices** at the same time to avoid the cost of staying open without activity. However, some provide limited service (emergency assistance).
- **Public infrastructure projects:** Major public works (bridges, dams) often plan phases “without heavy work” for the break. For example, a highway worksite may use the period for paving or installing prefabricated guardrails, tasks considered less critical, while phases requiring cranes or blasting are completed before the break. In practice, engineers often coordinate several worksites along the same corridor: while one section is shut down, another advances (which is complicated because the sector's principle of rigidity makes overlapping workflows rare).
- **Research and maintenance:** Some businesses use these two weeks to carry out major maintenance work on their equipment (machine calibration, vehicle fleet renewal) or to train their teams (viSeminars,

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

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