

Questions to Ask Your Potential Planting Company

The following questions will help applicants ascertain whether or not a planting company will be a good fit for your expectations. Always make sure to ask for answers to these questions to be given to you in writing!

01. Do you issue paycheques or do Direct Deposit? Do you pay 100% of earnings, at least every two weeks or twice per month, as per BC Employment Standards? Is this payment made regularly, no more than eight days after the end of the pay period in question?
02. In cases where an employee does not earn the equivalent of minimum wage during a pay period, including applicable overtime hours, do you top up the employee's pay to meet that equivalent amount? Is top-up pay available to each individual employee as needed, or is it part of a limited pool or limited budget?
03. When recording hours of work, to be used on my Record Of Employment (ROE) and for Employment Insurance (EI) purposes, do you record portal-to-portal hours as required by law, or just the time spent on the block?
04. What is the typical departure time in the morning, and when do the vehicles typically return to the camp/motel at the end of the planting day? How many hours typically get recorded for ROE & EI purposes?
05. Does your company supply flagging tape/ribbon at no charge to the planters?
06. Does the company require planters to purchase their own cache tarps?
07. Does the company pass quality/density fines on to the planters, as a deduction from wages?
08. If I'm required to help with camp set-up or teardown, will I be paid for this labour?
09. If I'm required to help unload a reefer, will I be paid for this labour?
10. What daily camp costs are charged by the company? Are camp costs charged on days off, or only on days when the planters are working? For companies that do not charge camp costs, are meals still provided?
11. If working out of motels, how many planters are assigned to each motel room? What kind of "camp costs" are charged to the employees to subsidize the cost of motel rooms? Are these costs charged every calendar day, or only on work days? If working out of a motel, am I expected to provide my own food? What kinds of kitchenette facilities are provided in the motel rooms? How large are the fridges? Do the kitchenettes have freezers?
12. What is the first expected day of work? What is the last expected day of work? What is the shift schedule? During the planned period of work, how many planting days do you expect to provide?

13. Who are the Clients for the coming season, and where will the various camps or motels be located? Has this camp or crew worked for these Clients before, and if so, for how long? What was the experience like? How many planting days are expected on each specific contract, and what is the average drive time to the block for each specific contract?
14. Will any of the contracts have access other than 4x4 pickup? Do any of the contracts require access by side-by-side or special types of off-road Utility Transport Vehicles (UTV's)? How often will helicopters be used?
15. Do you have any additional other types of work available after the planting season is over? If so, can you provide any details, including the type of work, the amount of work available, the likelihood that I would be able to participate in such work, and the compensation?
16. Please detail your safety protocols. In particular, how much training do drivers require before being allowed to drive a company vehicle? What driving-related requirements do people need to be aware of? What types of vehicles does the company use to transport the crews? How often are these vehicles maintained/serviced/inspected?
17. What safety equipment or personal protective equipment (PPE) are planters required to wear? Does the company provide any of this equipment?
18. Do you always ensure that planters are given a tree price for each block before planting commences on the block? Are prices given verbally or in writing?
19. Are Vacation Pay and Statutory Holiday Pay included in per-tree earnings that you quote, or are they added on top of the tree price?
20. If I will be working out of a bush camp, is potable water provided? Is this water trucked in, or purified on-site? Are water samples analyzed?
21. Is travel between contracts covered by the employer, or are planters expected to travel to the next contract/site using their own vehicle?
22. If I will be working out of a bush camp, does the camp meet all applicable provincial camp standards? Does the company file a written Notice Of Project with the appropriate provincial agency, and allow inspections by Health Board and WorkSafe compliance officers?

This list is taken from: "Step By Step: A Tree Planter's Handbook. A Comprehensive Training Guide and Reference Manual for Canadian Reforestation Workers." Free download at: www.replant.ca/digitaldownloads.html