

Ministry of Municipal Affairs Estimates Debate 2021/22

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MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

1. Local Government Transfers

Cabinet Confidences; Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

Cabinet Confidences; Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

2. Auditor General for Local Government (AGLG)

Question: Why are you getting rid of the Office of the AGLG?

Response:

- Government took a second look at the review done on the AGLG in 2018, and how the Office is supporting local governments to deliver for the public.
- While the review showed that some local governments found value in AGLG services, the Office was imposed on local governments when it was created and UBCM – on behalf of all B.C. local governments – continues to not be in support of the Office.
- While we have made the decision to dissolve the Office, I know the information gained during its time will help us and UBCM as we support local governments.

We want to thank the AGLG Mike Furey and the Audit Council members for their contributions to the Office.

Ministry of Municipal Affairs

2021/22 Estimates Summary

MINISTRY ESTIMATES BUDGET OVERVIEW

Ministry Operations Vote 38
2021/22 Estimate Budget: \$308.198M (a net increase of \$159.620M or 107.4% from the Restated Estimates 2020/21 of \$148.578M)

The \$159.620M increase is primarily due to the following:

- \$154.570M increase due to the timing of payments on the following Local Government transfers:
 - \$62M increase due to the addition of the Capital Regional District Wastewater Treatment Project in 2021/22
 - \$52.020M increase due to the addition of the Peace River Agreement in 2021/22
 - \$40.550M increase due to the addition of the Traffic Fine Revenue Sharing agreement in 2021/22
- \$15M increase due to the timing of the Library Government Transfers payment in 2019/20
- \$1.731M increase to cover costs related to Community Social Services Recruitment and Retention
- \$1.001M increase for the Sustainable Services Negotiating Mandate
- \$0.018M increase due for other operating needs

The above increases are offset by:

- \$10M decrease for fiscal adjustment per *Budget 2020* decision
- \$1.5M decrease for the completion of the Housing Needs Report
- \$1.2M decrease due to winding down of Office of the Auditor General for Local Government

CORE BUSINESS SUMMARY

Local Government Division \$270.950M

- \$270.950M (\$158.209M increase from Restated Estimates 2020/21 of \$112.741M)
 - \$62M increase due to the addition of the Capital Regional District Wastewater Treatment Project in 2021/22
 - \$52.020M increase due to the addition of the Peace River Agreement in 2021/22
 - \$40.550M increase due to the addition of the Traffic Fine Revenue Sharing agreement in 2021/22
 - \$15M increase due to the timing of the Library Government Transfers payment made in 2019/20
 - \$0.139M increase for the Sustainable Services Negotiating Mandate
 - \$10M decrease fiscal adjustment per *Budget 2020* decision
 - \$1.5M decrease due to completion of the Housing Needs Report

Immigration Services and Strategic Planning \$18.977M

- \$18.977M (\$2.374M increase from Restated Estimates 2020/21 of \$16.603M)
 - \$1.731M increase to cover costs related to Community Social Services Recruitment and Retention
 - \$0.745M increase for the Sustainable Services Negotiating Mandate
 - \$0.102M decrease due to a One-time Reorganization adjustment

Executive and Support Services \$7.603M

- Minister's Office
\$620K (\$45k increase from Restated Estimates 2020/21 of \$575k)
 - \$45K increase to support Minister's Office resources
- Corporate Services
\$6.983M (\$1.083M decrease from Restated Estimates 2020/21 of \$8.066M)
 - \$1.2M decrease due to winding down of the Office of the Auditor General for Local Government

- \$0.117M increase for the Sustainable Services Negotiating Mandate

Special Accounts \$10.668M

- University Endowment Lands Administration Account
\$10.668M (\$75K increase from Restated Estimates 2020/21 of \$10.593M)
 - \$75K increase to the University Endowment Special Account for amortization expenses on capital improvement projects

Ministry Capital Budget

- \$2.601M (\$1.660M decrease from Restated Estimates 2020/21 of \$4.261M)
 - \$1.615M decrease for the Wesbrook mall capital improvement project
 - \$45K decrease for the Local Government Information System



November 26, 2020

Honourable Josie Osborne
Minister of Municipal Affairs
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Osborne:

Thank you for agreeing to serve British Columbians as Minister of Municipal Affairs. You are taking on this responsibility at a time when people in our province face significant challenges as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has turned the lives of British Columbians upside down. None of us expected to face the challenges of the past number of months, yet British Columbians have demonstrated incredible resilience, time and time again. We will get through the pandemic and its aftereffects by building on this resilience and focusing on what matters most to people.

British Columbians voted for a government focused on their priorities: fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, providing better health care for people and families, delivering affordability and security in our communities, and investing in good jobs and livelihoods in a clean-energy future.

I expect you – and the work of your ministry – to focus on the commitments detailed in our platform, *Working for You*, along with the following foundational principles:

- **Putting people first:** Since 2017, our government has focused on making decisions to meet people's needs. That focus drove our work in our first term and will continue to be our priority. British Columbians are counting on the government to keep them safe and to build an economic recovery that works for everyone, not just those at the top. Keeping people at the centre of everything we do means protecting and enhancing the public services people rely on and working to make life more affordable for everyone.
- **Lasting and meaningful reconciliation:** Reconciliation is an ongoing process and a shared responsibility for us all. The unanimous passage of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* was a significant step forward in this journey. True

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Office of the
Premier

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reconciliation will take time and ongoing commitment to work with Indigenous peoples as they move toward self-determination. Our government – and every ministry – must remain focused on creating opportunities for Indigenous peoples to be full partners in our economy and providing a clear and sustainable path for everyone to work toward lasting reconciliation.

- **Equity and anti-racism:** Our province's history, identity and strength are rooted in its diverse population. Yet racialized and marginalized people face historic and present-day barriers that limit their full participation in their communities, workplaces, government and their lives. Our government has a moral and ethical responsibility to tackle systemic discrimination in all its forms – and every ministry has a role in this work. While our caucus elected a record number of women, more work remains to address gender equity. Delivering on our commitments to address racial discrimination will require a commitment by all of government to ensure increased IBPOC (Indigenous, Black and People of Colour) representation within the public service, including in government appointments. Our efforts to address systemic discrimination must also inform policy and budget decisions by reviewing all decisions through a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens.
- **A better future through fighting climate change:** In 2018, our government launched our CleanBC climate action plan. CleanBC puts British Columbia on the path to a cleaner, better future by building a low-carbon economy with new clean-energy jobs and opportunities, protecting our air, land and water and supporting communities to prepare for climate impacts. It is every Minister's responsibility to ensure your ministry's work continues to achieve CleanBC's goals.
- **A strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone:** We will continue our work to support British Columbians through the pandemic and the economic recovery by investing in health care, getting people back to work, helping businesses and communities, and building the clean, innovative economy of the future. Our plan will train the workforce of tomorrow, help businesses hire and grow and invest in the infrastructure needed to build our province.

The pandemic has reminded us that we're strongest when we work together. Delivering on our commitments to people will require a coordinated effort with your cabinet and caucus colleagues, supported by the skilled professionals in the public service. You will also support your cabinet colleagues to do their work, particularly where commitments cross ministry lines.

British Columbians expect their elected representatives to work together to advance the broader public good despite their partisan perspectives. That means seeking out, fostering and championing good ideas, regardless of their origin. I expect you to reach out to elected members from all parties as you deliver on your mandate. Further, you will build thoughtful and sustained relationships through public and stakeholder engagement plans that connect with people to incorporate their perspectives early in the policy development process. These plans must include measurable outcomes and ensure active dialogue and ongoing outreach in your ministry's actions and priorities.

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Over the course of our mandate, I expect you will make progress on the following items:

- Work with UBCM and local government elected leaders to support their communities through the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery.
- Improve local communities' ability to respond to the COVID-19 crisis by launching the new Strengthening Community Fund to enable local governments to apply for funding to help them tackle street disorder, cleanliness and public safety, and improve their ability to respond to challenges posed to businesses and neighbourhoods by homelessness.
- Work with cabinet colleagues to redouble our government's efforts to streamline foreign credential assessments processed by various regulatory bodies and health-related colleges to make sure immigrants can more easily strengthen their language skills and access job opportunities in their field of training.
- With support from the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing, work to bring down the cost of housing for people by streamlining and modernizing development permitting and approvals.
- Work with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to support economic recovery in communities across B.C. by continuing to build important infrastructure projects, including through StrongerBC and the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.
- With support from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, lead work on the Integrated Transportation and Development Strategy to ensure greater alignment between transportation and land-use planning.
- Support the work of the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing and the Minister of Finance to continue work to provide relief for commercial tenants with triple-net leases who are paying high property taxes.
- Support the work of the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness, including those living in encampments.
- Support the work of the Minister of Finance to establish Property Assessed Clean Energy financing.

Our work as a government must continually evolve to meet the changing needs of people in this province. Issues not contemplated in this letter will come forward for government action and I ask you to bring such matters forward for consideration by the Planning and Priorities Committee of cabinet, with the expectation that any proposed initiatives will be subject to the usual cabinet and Treasury Board oversight. Your ministry's priorities must reflect our government's overall strategic plan as determined by cabinet.

All cabinet members are expected to review, understand, and act according to the *Members' Conflict of Interest Act* and conduct themselves with the highest level of integrity. As a minister

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of the Crown, your conduct will reflect not only on you but on cabinet and our government. You are responsible for providing strong, professional and ethical leadership within cabinet and your ministry. You will establish a collaborative working relationship with your deputy minister and the public servants under their direction who provide the professional, non-partisan advice that is fundamental to delivering on our government's priorities. You must ensure your minister's office meets the highest standards for integrity and provides a respectful and rewarding environment for all staff.

My commitment to all British Columbians is to do my level best to make sure people's lives are better, safer and more affordable. I believe the challenges we face can and will be overcome by working together. By way of this letter, I am expressing my faith that people can expect the same commitment from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John J. Horgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Horgan
Premier

Mandate Letter Commitments 2020	Division Lead	Status
Minister Josie Osborne Mandate letter		
<p>1. Work with UBCM and local government elected leaders to support their communities through the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery.</p>	<p>LGD – LGPRL; LGD – OCRU and ADMO; LGD – LGIF LGD – GSB LGD - PLUM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between December 2020 and end of April 2021, Minister held 20 regular regional teleconferences with local government leaders (municipal mayors, regional district chairs; CAOs) to provide updates on COVID-19 both generally and on specific topics (e.g. vaccination roll out; mental health and addictions), including participation from UBCM, PHO and relevant ministries; these teleconferences are continuing approximately every 4-6 weeks. Each teleconference is followed by a general email to all participants providing information, answers to common questions, links, resources, etc., in addition to individual follow up responses to enquiries sent in by local governments. • The Minister typically meets quarterly with UBCM Executive and ministry staff generally meet bi-monthly with UBCM senior staff. Two formal meetings with UBCM Executive members and two staff-level meetings took place from November 2020 to April 2021 including one UBCM President’s meeting in December 2020. Various agenda topics relating to COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery were discussed as needed. Minister generally meets one on one with 60+ local government and UBCM First Nations member delegates annually during the UBCM Convention in September to hear about community issues/concerns. As well, a number of ministry staff meetings with delegates also take place to discuss issues/concerns. • Canada-BC Safe Restart Agreement for Local Government provided \$425 million in direct funding to 188 local governments to address fiscal impacts of COVID-19. The funds support facility reopening and operating costs; emergency planning and response costs; bylaw enforcement costs; protective services; uncollected revenues, and other COVID-19 related impacts.



Mandate Letter Commitments 2020	Division Lead	Status
Minister Josie Osborne Mandate letter		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="842 350 1871 521">• To date over 30 Ministerial Orders have been issued to support local governments conducting by-elections or holding assent votes. The Orders adjust election rules to address high touch points during the election process (e.g. allowing for mail ballot voting and oral declarations). Guidance has been created to provide practical advice for local governments with pending by-elections or assent votes. <li data-bbox="842 565 1871 1057">• The <i>COVID-19 Related Measures Act</i> (CRMA) and Ministerial Order M192 (Order M192) provide flexibility for local governments to shift how they are conducting meetings and public hearings based on the current PHO recommendations. Order M192 provides that a council or body is not required to allow members of the public to attend a meeting if, despite the best efforts of the council or body, the attendance of members of the public cannot be accommodated at a meeting that would otherwise be held in accordance with the applicable requirements or recommendations under the <i>Public Health Act</i>. Order M192 also allows for local governments and local government bodies to conduct their regular meetings electronically. It also enables local governments and local trust committees under the <i>Islands Trust Act</i>, to conduct public hearings electronically, in all circumstances that have previously required an in-person hearing. Additional best practice advice was created in collaboration with LGMA for local governments meeting or conducting hearings electronically. <li data-bbox="842 1101 1871 1341">• On going advice and problem-solving support provided to local governments on financial issues. In terms of monitoring, Ministry staff will monitor the 2020 financial statements to see how individual local governments managed COVID-19 impacts (tax collection efficiency, change in cash position, and surplus/deficit position). Guidance provided to individual local governments on the implementation of an alternative tax scheme (sections 235 and 236 of the <i>Community Charter</i>)



Mandate Letter Commitments 2020	Division Lead	Status
Minister Josie Osborne Mandate letter		
<p>2. Improve local communities' ability to respond to the COVID-19 crisis by launching the new Strengthening Community Fund to enable local governments to apply for funding to help them tackle street disorder, cleanliness and public safety, and improve their ability to respond to challenges posed to businesses and neighbourhoods by homelessness.</p>	<p>ISSP</p> <p>LGD-PLUM</p>	<p>The Community Gaming Grants program contributes to Mandate commitments #1 and #2; in supporting communities through the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery and improving local communities' ability to respond to the COVID-19. In 2020, the program made changes to make it easier for non-profit organizations to adapt and continue to provide vital services to British Columbians. Applications for the human and social services sector, which includes food banks, shelters, domestic violence supports, hospice, counselling services and other services, opened two months early to respond to community needs. Financial eligibility requirements were relaxed in order to not penalize organizations experiencing interruptions to their programming or receiving emergency government assistance. For the Capital Project Grant, projects or acquisitions needed to modify how programs and services are delivered, or projects required due to increased demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic were given additional weight during the selection process, and the matching funds required were reduced from 50% to 20%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) is administering the \$100 million Strengthening Communities' Services Fund program on behalf of the province and serves as the point of contact for all inquires and questions from applicants. • The program aims to support unsheltered homeless populations and address related community impacts through an application-based program funded under the Canada-BC Safe Restart Agreement; the program is open to all local governments and the eight First Nations in B.C with modern treaties. • Applications were accepted between February 18, 2021, and April 16, 2021. • UBCM is solely responsible for reviewing and adjudicating applications and expects to conclude the approvals process later in the spring. Should there be funding remaining at the end of this first funding intake, a second intake would likely occur as soon as possible.



Mandate Letter Commitments 2020	Division Lead	Status
Minister Josie Osborne Mandate letter		
3. Work with cabinet colleagues to redouble our government’s efforts to streamline foreign credential assessments processed by various regulatory bodies and health-related colleges to make sure immigrants can more easily strengthen their language skills and access job opportunities in their field of training.	ISSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This topic has been a mandate letter item since 2017. Significant progress has been made, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expanding by nearly 50% (to \$5.8M) the Career Paths for Skilled Immigration program, which provides direct services to newcomers to help them get their credentials recognized, upgrade their language skills, and find employment in their field. 70% of clients find employment in their field upon program completion (Service Plan performance measure) ○ Creating the Credential Assessment Improvement Fund (up to \$1M/year), which undertakes projects to improve the information available to newcomers about credential recognition and to help professional regulatory bodies streamline their credential assessment processes. • Work is underway to develop options for how government can “double-down” on these efforts. An initial Minister briefing is expected in early May.
4. With support from the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing, work to bring down the cost of housing for people by streamlining and modernizing development permitting and approvals.	LGD - PLUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority areas of work have been identified to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of local government development approvals. Multiple workstreams within each priority areas will include funding programs, policy guidance, technical support and tools and legislative change. • Early actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The launch of a \$15 million funding program under the Canada-BC Safe Restart Agreement on March 5th, 2021, to support local governments in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of their development approvals processes through implementing established best practices and testing innovative approaches. The program is being delivered by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. Program intake closes May 7th, 2021. <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Cabinet Conferences; Advice/Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice/Recommendations
5. Work with the Minister of Transportation and	LGD – LGIF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program (CERIP) provided 100% funding for projects up to \$1 million to local governments, First Nations and not



Mandate Letter Commitments 2020	Division Lead	Status
Minister Josie Osborne Mandate letter		
<p>Infrastructure to support economic recovery in communities across B.C. by continuing to build important infrastructure projects, including through StrongerBC and the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.</p>		<p>for profits. Under the Community Economic Resilience stream 63 projects for a total of \$30 million were announced in February 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) – Covid19 Resilient Infrastructure Stream (CVRIS). This program was enabled through amending the ICIP bilateral agreement. The application intake, with \$136 million available, for projects supporting communities with pandemic response, retrofits, active transportation and disaster mitigation closed in January 2021. Project approvals will occur throughout Spring 2021. Intakes for 3 other ICIP streams (Rural and Northern Communities, Community, Culture and Recreation, CleanBC Communities Fund) occurred to provide medium term recovery projects to communities throughout the province. Intergovernmental Intergovernmental Communications Cabinet Confidences; Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications; Government Financial Information
<p>6. Support the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to work on the Integrated Transportation and Development Strategy to ensure greater alignment between transportation and land-use planning</p>	<p>ISSP</p>	<p>The Integrated Transportation and Development Strategy is intended to improve the seamless movement of people and goods, enable trade, prepare for future growth, and encourage the development of diverse, affordable, resilient, and connected communities.</p> <p>The development of ITDS concepts, planning and supporting data are underway. Potential ITDS concepts and approaches are being applied and tested in the Fraser Valley Integrated Transportation and Development Plan. This holistic and collaborative plan will enable all parties to coordinate and make transportation, land use and housing decisions that will best serve the Fraser Valley and neighbouring regions.</p>

Mandate Letter Commitments 2020	Division Lead	Status
Minister Josie Osborne Mandate letter		
		As the development of the ITDS progresses, the province will work with stakeholders to create a collaborative vision for integrating provincial growth and transportation networks. This work will also aim to align the ITDS with local and regional priorities and plans. The Province will be engaging with partners to better understand opportunities and challenges in advancing integrated planning on the ground.
7. Support the work of the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing and the Minister of Finance to continue work to provide relief for commercial tenants with triplenet leases who are paying high property taxes.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government is aware that many small businesses/non-profits operating under triple-net leases located on development properties, are struggling to remain economically viable due to significant property tax increases. For the 2020 tax year, legislation was enacted to provide Municipalities with authority to provide interim relief to identified small business properties through partial tax exemptions. <p>Advice/Recommendations</p>
8. Support the work of the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness, including those living in encampments.	LGD - PLUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Planning and Land Use Management Branch are participating in the Homelessness Strategy Working Group led by the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry Responsible for Housing, to help assist government’s efforts to address homelessness by supporting the development of a provincial homelessness strategy. Advice/Recommendations Note also the Strengthening Communities Services Fund (ML #2 noted above)
9. Support the work of the Minister of Finance to establish Property Assessed Clean Energy financing.	LGD: LGIF PRL PLUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback and advice provided on the development of a proposed approach to establishing Property Assessed Clean Energy financing Identification and analysis of impacts tot the local government finance system.



Community Gaming Grants – Capital Projects Sector

ISSUE

- As part of Budget 2017, Treasury Board approved a \$5 million base budget lift starting in 2017/18 to support a new capital component of the Community Gaming Grants (CGG) program.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- **The Ministry has successfully delivered the Capital Project Grant Program for four years, from 2017/18 to 2020/21. 2021/22 will be the fifth year of the program.**
- **Applications are competitively assessed against the published eligibility criteria by professional public servants in the CGG Branch.**
- **In 2020/21, 81 projects were funded representing all regions of B.C. and all six CGG sectors.**
- **Two Indigenous projects were supported, including renovations to a Friendship Centre in Merritt and acquisitions to support mobile outreach in Nanaimo.**
- **In 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2020/21, additional capital projects were funded with money that was not fully spent in the regular \$135 million program; the Branch did not fund additional projects in 2019/2020.**
- **In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting pressures on not for profit organizations, the Branch made changes to the program in 2020/21, such as: amendments to the program assessment criteria to give priority consideration to projects that are required as a direct result of COVID-19 and a reduction in the ‘matching funds’ requirements for COVID-19 related applications from 50 per cent to 20 per cent of project costs, in recognition of the financial challenges they face.**



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- In February 2017, government announced that an additional \$5 million in funding for capital projects was allocated to the CGG program.
- Staff developed detailed assessment criteria with input from other areas of government and key stakeholders such as the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and the British Columbia Association for Charitable Gaming.
- The Capital Projects Sector Guide is updated each year, providing information on eligibility, the application process, the assessment criteria, and the appropriate use of funds.
- The Manager of Community Outreach attended more than twenty information sessions across the Province in 2019/20, including sessions in Terrace, Fort St. John, Prince George, Kamloops, and other small communities in central B.C.
- Due to COVID-19 and the vacant Manager of Community Outreach position, there were fewer outreach sessions in 2020/21. The position is now filled, and more outreach sessions will be planned for 2021/22.
- Eligible not-for-profit organizations were approved for between 20 to 50 per cent of the total cost of a project, to a maximum of \$250,000. Applicants were required to have matching funds. Projects had a total cost of more than \$20,000.
- The project categories included the construction of new facilities and renovation of existing facilities; development of public amenities; and purchase of fixed capital assets. All projects were primarily for community benefit and accessible to the public.
- Additional considerations were made to include regional distribution, sector distribution, project size and Indigenous inclusion.
- The Branch received 242 applications in 2020/21, representing a total ask of \$24 million.
- Recent funding history is as follows: 2017/18 had 107 projects at \$9.2 million, 2018/19 had 88 projects at \$8.3 million, 2019/20 had 63 projects at \$4.9 million, and 2020/21 had 81 projects at \$7.7 million.

CONTACT: Rachel Holmes, ADM, Community Gaming Grants Branch, 250-356-7325

Community Gaming Grants – Regular

ISSUE

- More than 5,000 not-for-profit organizations, representing communities throughout B.C., benefit from \$135 million in Community Gaming Grants (CGG) every year to directly deliver approved programs in their communities.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- In 2021/22, CGG will continue to be awarded to a diverse range of not-for-profit organizations representing six sectors: arts and culture, sport, environment, public safety, human and social services and parent advisory councils. The Capital Projects Sector will also return for its fifth year in 2021.
- In 2017/18, the program budget increased from \$135 million to \$140 million to accommodate the inclusion of a new Capital Projects Sector grant (\$5M).
- A revenue-sharing agreement between B.C. and First Nations communities was announced in *Budget 2019*.
- This gaming revenue-sharing arrangement will not change the amount of funding that currently goes to B.C.'s not-for-profit sector through the CGG program.
- In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting pressures on not for profit organizations, the Branch made changes to the program in 2020/21, such as:
 - Allowing organizations to redirect program funds for cancelled or postponed programming to any other approved program;
 - Extending the permissible timeframe to spend gaming funds from 12 to 24 months, allowing organizations to retain funding for future program delivery; and
 - Opening the Human and Social Services sector two months earlier to support organizations that were facing an increased demand for services due to the pandemic.

Honourable Josie Osborne

April 2021

- **For 2021/22, many of these COVID-19 Response Measures will continue and are written into the Program Guidelines. New temporary changes for 2021/22 include:**
 - **Relaxing financial eligibility criteria for return applicants to ensure organizations can continue to access the CGG; and**
 - **Allowing CGG funding to be used for the creation of new paid positions, supporting organizations to increase staff capacity.**
- **The Province is committed to considering input from all stakeholders regarding the program, including ongoing consultation with the British Columbia Association for Charitable Gaming (BCACG).**
- **The Branch has also incorporated stakeholder feedback from the 2018 BC Stats survey, which was sent to all applicant organizations plus a sample of non-applicant not-for-profits. 3,656 survey responses were received.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- CGG funding level history:
 - 2008/09 pre-economic recession funding was \$156 million.
 - 2009/10, CGG funding was reduced to \$112.5 million.
 - In March 2011, the funding level was increased to \$135 million.
 - In 2017/18 – CGG program funding increased to \$140 million. The \$5 million increase remains dedicated to funding Capital Projects.
- In 2019/20 there was a \$3.0 million year-end program surplus in the \$135 million regular program that was provided to Food Banks British Columbia to reallocate to food banks throughout BC during the provincial state of emergency.
 - The primary reason for the surplus was fewer approved applications in the Human and Social Services sector.



2021/22 Estimates Note

Honourable Josie Osborne

April 2021

- The Branch also implemented changes to the CGG \$5 million 'Capital Projects' program in 2020/21, including: amendments to the program assessment criteria to give priority consideration to projects that are required as a direct result of COVID-19 and a reduction in the 'matching funds' requirements for COVID-19 related applications from 50 per cent to 20 per cent of project costs, in recognition of the financial challenges they face.

CONTACT: Rachel Holmes, ADM, Community Gaming Grants Branch, 250-356-7325

Community Gaming Grants - Audits

ISSUE

- A compliance audit conducted by the Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch at the Ministry of Attorney General in 2019 determined that the Health Action Network Society (HANS) was ineligible for funding for having objectives, programs or expenditures that do not conform with all laws, regulations and the general public policies of the Province.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- **Provincial staff conducted an audit of the Health Action Network Society's compliance with the Community Gaming Grants (CGG) Guidelines' requirements.**
- **The program staff's decision to suspend the organization's access to funding in 2019 was based upon the audit's findings.**
- **The organization submitted a request for reconsideration on the decision to suspend access to funding. A decision to uphold the denial was communicated to the organization by ADM Tara Faganello on July 14, 2020.**
- **The organization was instructed to repay \$9,574.99 of CGG funding to the Branch within 10 days of ADM Faganello's letter.**
- **The organization responded on July 23, 2020, disputing the repayment of CGG funding. As of April 14, 2021, the repayment from the organization remains outstanding.**
- **The organization has not applied for a CGG in 2020/21.**
- **Decisions about CGG are made by public service employees who are statutory decision makers, not by ministers or Cabinet.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- The organization came to government's attention after receiving extensive media coverage in spring 2019 for promoting "vaccine safety" messages.
- The organization has been reviewed and audited and it was determined that the organization's program content related to "vaccine safety" did not conform with the Ministry of Health's Strategic Framework for Immunization in B.C.



2021/22 Estimates Note

Honourable Josie Osborne

April 2021

- The ministry made the decision that the organization would be ineligible to apply for funding for one-year but may reapply in 2020/21.
- The organization will be required to demonstrate adherence to provincial public policy to be eligible to receive funding.

Advice/Recommendations

- The Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch conducts audits based on a range of criteria including risk factors, public complaints, and concerns regarding the organization's reporting and/or application.

CONTACT: Rachel Holmes, ADM, Community Gaming Grants Branch, 250-356-7325

Community Gaming Grants – 2021/22 Policy Changes

ISSUE

- Every year, the Community Gaming Grant (CGG) Branch updates the Program Guidelines to incorporate major policy changes, address stakeholder feedback, improve administration and increase clarity.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- **The Program Guidelines were released in mid-January 2021 and took effect on February 1, 2021.**
- **As a result of the 2016 Office of the Auditor General Report, the Branch committed to a continuous improvement approach where the Guidelines are updated and improved annually.**
- **The Branch made several temporary policy changes to the 2021 Guidelines to support COVID-19 re-start and recovery:**
 - **The Human and Social Services sector will open two months earlier, in June, to support organizations that are facing an increased demand for services due to the pandemic;**
 - **Financial eligibility criteria for return applicants will be temporarily relaxed to ensure organizations can continue to access the CGG;**
 - **The requirement for programming to have been delivered for 12 months has been relaxed for return applicants, as well as for new programs responding to COVID-19 related needs; and**
 - **CGG funding may be used for the creation of new paid positions, to supporting organizations to retain staff and increase capacity.**
- **In addition to the COVID-19 re-start and recovery changes, the Branch made minor changes and clarification to existing policy to better assist applicants.**



Honourable Josie Osborne

Date: March 10, 2021

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Advice/Recommendations
 - Engagement from key stakeholders, including the BC Association for Charitable Gaming and the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centers is sought for material changes to the Guidelines prior to their finalization.
 - The Branch made changes to the CGG \$135 million 'Regular' program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in spring of 2020. Many of these changes have now been formally written into the 2021 Guidelines as temporary policy changes to support COVID-19 re-start and recovery.
 - The Branch also made changes to the CGG \$5 million 'Capital Projects' program in 2020/21, including: amendments to the program assessment criteria to give priority consideration to projects that are required as a direct result of COVID-19 and a reduction in the 'matching funds' requirements for COVID-19 related applications from 50 per cent to 20 per cent of project costs, in recognition of the financial challenges they face.

CONTACT: Rachel Holmes, ADM, Community Gaming Grants Branch, 250-356-7325

DISSOLUTION OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

ISSUE

- The Office of the Auditor General for Local Government (AGLG) has closed.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- **While the results of the 2018 independent review showed that many local governments found value in AGLG services, the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) continued to oppose the Office.**
- **The Province wants to work with the UBCM and local governments on financial and performance best practices within the local government system.**
- **I want to thank both the AGLG and the Audit Council members for making significant improvements to the Office since 2015 and for their hard work assisting local governments.**
- **The 32 performance audits and 10 good practices booklets produced by the AGLG will continue to be available through the ministry's website.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- In 2015, UBCM endorsed a resolution calling on government to eliminate the AGLG. The resolution stated such a function is already met under existing local government legislation and regulations.
- In February 2020, the previous Minister decided to close the Office. Factors for closing the office included UBCM's continued opposition and the high costs of audits.
- The mandated activities of the AGLG Office were completed by March 31, 2021 and the office closed. Final administrative tasks related to closing the office are being managed by the Ministry.
- The *Auditor General for Local Government Act* will be repealed. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we do not expect to complete this legislative work this fiscal (2021/22)

CONTACT: Rachel Holmes, ADM, Immigration and Strategic Planning Division, Phone Number 250 356-7325

CREENTIAL RECOGNITION AND LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

ISSUE

- Government programs and initiatives to improve credential recognition and labour market outcomes of immigrants in BC.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- **Our government is working to support the best employment outcomes for newcomers to our province.**
- **Since 2017 we have significantly increased funding to improve the process of foreign credential recognition and help newcomers find employment in their field.**
- **We will build on these successes to continue improving employment outcomes for immigrants and support the provincial economy.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- In B.C. more than 60 regulatory authorities serve an important role for health, safety, and consumer protection by assessing and recognizing professional qualifications for approximately 250 regulated occupations.
- Many immigrants arrive to B.C. with valuable education, skills and experience gained outside of Canada. However, they may experience barriers to professional recognition that can create challenges for employment success.
- The Province spends \$5.8 million annually on the Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants program to help people new to B.C. find employment in occupations that match their pre-arrival skills, education and experience.
- Another \$1 million is allocated for the Credential Assessment Improvement Fund (CAIF), which supports projects to improve regulator processes and information for newcomers—levelling the playing field for newcomers.
- The ministry has a mandate commitment to redouble government's efforts on foreign credential recognition. Work is underway to develop options for how the ministry can build on existing initiatives to improve labour market outcomes for newcomers.

CONTACT: Carling Helander, Executive Director, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, 250-886-5632

BC SETTLEMENT SERVICES

ISSUE

- Provincial programs to support the settlement and integration of newcomers.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- **When newcomers come to BC, they often need help to adjust to their new hometown, successfully integrate into their community, and join the job market.**
- **The Province currently provides \$11.7 million in annual funding to support newcomers, more than 50 per cent higher than in 2017.**
- **This funding complements federal funding to ensure newcomers have supports across their immigration journey.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- The province's annual investment of \$11.7M in settlement services is split between two programs: BC Settlement and Integration Services (BCSIS) and Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants.
- BCSIS (\$5.9M) provides services to approximately 24,000 temporary residents and naturalized Canadian citizens per year in over 60 communities across B.C. This includes resources and services for vulnerable clients such as a refugee claimants and foreign workers.
- There is a high demand for these services. Reporting from the past three years shows that annual client targets are exceeded by approximately 55% per cent.
- Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants (\$5.8M) helps skilled permanent residents to find employment commensurate with their pre-arrival skills, education and experience.
- In 2019/20, Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants served more than 1,500 clients across B.C., with 72 per cent of clients achieved employment in the field upon program completion. Ensuring strong credential recognition supports for skilled newcomers is integral for a strong economic recovery and is outlined in the mandate letter.
- During COVID-19, settlement services continue to be provided across the province virtually, by telephone or in-person.

CONTACT: Carling Helander, Executive Director, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, 250-886-5632

MULTICULTURAL HELPING HOUSE SOCIETY

ISSUE

- Governance and service quality concerns regarding Multicultural Helping House Society

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- **We take any concerns with how programs and services are delivered to newcomers seriously.**
- **It was disappointing to hear that clients and employees at Multicultural Helping House Society were not receiving the support they needed to succeed here in B.C.**
- **Over the last two years, we have worked closely with the society to implement new policies and processes - such as the hiring of new staff and monthly status updates - to address these concerns and make sure they do not happen again.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- The Multicultural Helping House Society (MHHS) is a non-profit society that receives approximately \$100,000 in annual funding from the Immigration Policy and Integration Branch to deliver settlement services to newcomers in Metro Vancouver.
- In response to concerns raised about MHHS's governance and service quality, the Branch has conducted extensive due diligence, including requesting changes to its financial and governance practices, monitoring service quality and increasing oversight including site visits and monthly reporting.
- The organization has made several changes including changes to the board leadership, hiring a new executive director and staff and built stronger governance and financial oversight.
- Due to these improvements, the Branch extended MHHS's contract for the 2021/22 fiscal year. While areas of improvement still exist, the Branch believes they can be managed within the contract management process.

CONTACT: Carling Helander, Executive Director, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, 250-886-5632

2021 Federal Immigration Levels and Policy Changes

ISSUE

- Immigration levels and federal response to impacts of pandemic on targets

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- **BC is a welcoming province and immigration plays an important role in our social and economic fabric.**
- **We're aware that the federal government has committed to an ambitious immigration target this year and has created new, time-limited opportunities for temporary residents to apply for permanent residency.**
- **It is important that everyone in British Columbia has the best possible chance for success, so we will monitor the federal program closely to ensure any new policies and programs work for all British Columbians.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- The 2021-2023 federal immigration levels plan includes levels targets of 401,000 new permanent residents to be admitted to Canada in 2021 with growth to 421,000 by 2023. These targets are the highest levels targets in over 100 years.
- Canada's rationale behind higher levels is that a significant increase in Canada's newcomer intake will help support Canada's economic recovery.
- Pandemic border restrictions continue to affect Canada's ability to meet levels targets and as a result they are implementing new measures to make more individuals already in Canada eligible to apply for to permanent resident status.
- On February 13, 2021, IRCC invited all registrants (over 27,000) in the Canadian Experience Class to apply for permanent residence, dropping the required points score from a norm of 430+ to a low of 75, making individuals with lower levels of human capital eligible for permanent residence.
- The federal government also plans to create new, time-limited permanent resident pathways for temporary residents currently in Canada. These pathways would target francophone immigrants, foreign workers (with a focus on those in health care occupations and other critical occupations yet to be defined), and international graduates from Canadian institutions.

CONTACT: Carling Helander, Executive Director, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, 250-886-5632

BC Provincial Nominee Program COVID-19 Response

ISSUE

- Continuing to effectively administer the BC Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP) through the global pandemic.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- **We have needed to be responsive and flexible given the impact of the pandemic on the economy, jobs and on global travel.**
- **While the BC PNP public facing office closed in March 2020, the program has been delivered remotely for all lines of business.**
- **Throughout the year, some temporary criteria or process adjustments were made such as flexibility with deadlines, virtual interviews or restricted access for certain occupations.**
- **We maintain our commitment that nominations should not adversely affect employment or development opportunities for British Columbians.**
- **Through these measures, we approved 6,268 people for nomination.**
- **We continue to monitor the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the provincial labour market while remaining committed to attracting new permanent residents who can contribute to BC's economy.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- The BC PNP has been virtually on-line for a number of years, therefore the transition to remote service delivery was relatively seamless. Some processing time was lost due to time needed for adjusting various processes or policies.
- Current travel restrictions have an impact on prospective BC PNP candidates. In some cases, this has put categories on hold; in other cases, a virtual interview option has been provided.
- If nominees are not already in Canada, once nominated, they are exempt from travel restrictions and can come with a valid work permit to begin working for the employer. All are subject to conditions under the Quarantine Act.

CONTACT: Deb Zehr, Executive Director, Immigration Programs, 778 572-5685

BC Provincial Nominee Program Entrepreneur Immigration - Regional Pilot

ISSUE

- Extension of Regional Pilot to support smaller centres in economic recovery

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

- **The Regional Pilot was launched in March 2019 to support economic growth in smaller regional centres of B.C.**
- **It has been a positive model of collaboration between regional communities and the provincial government.**
- **The initiative has demonstrated its ability to attract entrepreneurs from around the world and contribute to regional economic development needs, despite the impacts of COVID-19.**
- **We understand that with global travel restrictions still in effect, communities may be focused on other priorities. This three-year extension will help communities to welcome entrepreneurs and be well positioned to support recovery post-pandemic.**
- **In total, 65 communities enrolled in the initial pilot phase and many will receive new entrepreneurs in their communities once international travel restrictions are lifted.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- The Regional Pilot is for communities under 75,000 and 30 km from larger centres. One hundred forty-five total referrals made by communities is 45% over the initial target of 100. A process review indicates positive early outcomes.
- Minor adjustments to the program will be made in consultation with communities in spring 2021 and the initiative will be open to new communities. These preparations will be made in anticipation of travel restrictions being lifted by the end of 2021, to be ready when foreign entrepreneurs can again conduct in-person exploratory visits.
- The collaborative network between communities and the Province can be leveraged in recovery efforts and the creation of future opportunities to attract international talent to regional communities.

CONTACT: Deb Zehr, Executive Director, Immigration Programs, 778 572-5685

