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Ministry of Attorney General 2025/26 Service Plan Framework

Goal	Objectives	Key Strategies	Performance Measures
Goal 1: The justice sector is fair and accessible	Objective 1.1: Enhance the user experience and modernize the justice system	- Advance the Courthouse Capital Asset Management Plan, including courthouse replacement and renovations, infrastructure remediation, WiFi expansion and facility enhancements across the province. - In alignment with the Court Digital Transformation Strategy, modernize the justice system for British Columbians, leveraging technology and user-centred design to assist users in navigating legal matters. - Continue to improve early resolution services offered to families remotely and in-person at Family Justice Centres and Justice Access Centres. This includes expansion of the early resolution process to the following Provincial Court family registries in 2025/26: Abbotsford, Chilliwack, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Pemberton, Richmond, Sechelt, and Vancouver (Robson Square). - Support the 20 boards and tribunals accountable to the ministry with business operations, transformation, innovation, and modernization, including the Civil Resolution Tribunal, Mental Health Review Board, and BC Human Rights Tribunal, among others. - Streamline the collection process for those who have obtained a court judgment or tribunal order for the payment of money, by continuing work to implement the Money Judgment Enforcement Act.	PM1a: Percentage of respondents who agreed that the Parenting After Separation program gave them a better understanding of the family justice system including its relevant laws and services. PM1b: Percentage of respondents who agreed that the program gave them a better understanding of alternatives to court.
	Objective 1.2: Increase access to justice	- Continue the legal professions regulatory modernization project with a focus on the implementation of the new Legal Professions Act, to create a single and modernized regulator for all legal service providers in the province, including lawyers, notaries public, and regulated paralegals. - Further family justice reform initiatives, including support for those experiencing family and intimate partner violence, resolving disputes out of court, modernizing the Family Law Act, and promoting the Child Support Recalculation Service. - Support the delivery of legal aid services for low-income British Columbians through Legal Aid BC. - In partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development, implement the Rights Advice Service for patients who are involuntarily detained under the Mental Health Act. - Work with First Nations to increase their access to justice, including the development of a cross-ministerial Assistant Deputy Minister advisory board that will establish a process and recommend initiatives for responding to First Nations' requests related to enforcement of laws, Indigenous Courts, and child welfare jurisdiction. - Work to strengthen consumer protection in B.C	PM1c: Percentage of respondents who agreed that the program gave them a better understanding of making decisions in the best interests of the children. PM1d: Percentage of eFiled Court Documents.

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Goal 2: British Columbian communities are protected and resilient	Objective 2.1: Improved community and public safety for all British Columbians.	- Dedicated BC Prosecution Service prosecutors and professional staff will continue to participate in the Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative. - The BC Prosecution Service will continue to apply its updated policy on hate crimes that target all identifiable groups, including those subjected to hate because of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or Indigeneity. - Operate and evaluate federally funded pilot programs to support those experiencing intimate partner violence as they navigate the family justice system. - Provide support for the Province's gender-based violence action plan.	PM2a: Number of B.C. communities engaged in projects that build intercultural trust and understanding and reduce racism and systemic barriers.
	Objective 2.2: Address systemic racism and support Indigenous and other racialized communities to respond to public incidents of racism and hate.	- Implement the Anti-Racism Act to better serve everyone in British Columbia and address systemic racism in government programs and services. - Work across ministries to respond to data trends identified through the Anti-Racism Data Act via implementation of the Anti-Racism Act. - Engage communities through the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network, multiculturalism grants, and related initiatives, to provide them with the information, supports, and training needed to respond to and prevent future incidents of racism. - Support victims of hate incidents in B.C. by operating the Racist Incident Helpline to report, track and provide resources to individuals harmed by racist incidents. - Continue to address historical wrongs with Sons of Freedom Doukhobor community and ongoing work with the National Association of Japanese Canadians.	
Goal 3: The justice sector is safe and responsive to Indigenous peoples	Objective 3.1: Facilitate self-determination and restoration of traditional Indigenous justice systems in partnerships with Indigenous leadership and communities.	- In partnership with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, the Federal Government, and Indigenous communities, continue work with the BC First Nations Justice Council to advance the B.C. First Nations Justice Strategy. - In partnership with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, work with the Métis Nation BC to develop a detailed implementation plan to advance the Métis Justice Strategy. - Deliver culturally appropriate justice services, with holistic wrap-around supports, for Indigenous people, through the network of 15 physical Indigenous Justice Centres and the virtual centre, with preliminary evaluation, service enhancements, and increased integration with other justice service providers. - Reduce Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system through ongoing policy review and changes, justice sector employee education, expansion of Indigenous courts (additional dates at existing locations), and outreach and partnerships with Indigenous communities.	PM3a: Number of cases from Indigenous Clients supported at Indigenous Justice Centres. PM3b: Number of Indigenous Clients served by Indigenous Justice Centres.

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		• In consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, continue reviewing and ensuring alignment of B.C. laws with UNDRIP for all statutes within the ministry's mandate including new and amending bills. • Support the interface between Indigenous laws and legal institutions and B.C.'s laws and legal institutions. Work collaboratively with Nations to assist them in the enforcement of their laws in multiple areas, including child welfare, offences, education, and debts.	
	Objective 3.2: Advance reconciliation through use of the Directives of Civil Litigation involving Indigenous peoples.	• Continue to work with Indigenous Peoples on implementation of the Directives. • Review active litigation to ensure the Directives are being implemented as intended, which may include making pleadings amendments. • Work with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation on identifying potential avenues for negotiation of the dispute, such as forms of alternative dispute resolution. • Seek early internal government meetings to discuss the possible effects of litigation on the work of reconciliation and try to identify collaborative ways to resolve all or part of the potential or newly filed legal proceedings. • When litigation has concluded, meet with clients to discuss preventing similar litigation in the future; as well as debriefing with counsel for the Indigenous parties to identify potential areas for improvement.	

Table 1: Progress Status of Current 2025 Mandate Letter Items

MANDATE LETTER ACCOUNTABILITY	STATUS
In order to protect key services that British Columbians rely on, work with the Minister of Finance to review all existing Ministry of Attorney General programs and initiatives to ensure programs remain relevant, are efficient, and speed up court and tribunal processes including judgment enforcement. This is important in the context of current Provincial budget constraints and overall efficiency.	In progress – AG has implemented enhanced expenditure management controls consistent with direction provided by the Ministry of Finance in February 2025. AG's 2025/26 Budget letter provides initial details on the process by which the Ministry of Finance, in coordination with the Premier's Office will be working through with all ministries to review programs. The letter also highlights an expenditure review process with further detail to be communicated by the Deputy Minister of Finance.
Ensure strong and safe communities for everyone across the province by aggressively pushing the federal government for continuing legal reform and cooperation with the province that will ensure violent and prolific offenders remain in custody after arrest.	In progress – BCPS is working with Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General (BC Corrections and Policing and Security Branch) to support the Safer Communities Action Plan through the ongoing development and management of the Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative (ReVOII). • ReVOII brings together police and dedicated probation officers with the aim of identifying and intervening in cases involving repeat violent offending at the earliest opportunity possible, and where appropriate, connects individuals with services to help break the cycle of reoffending. Teams of dedicated prosecutors make decisions about charge assessment and, where appropriate, the conduct of prosecutions involving individuals prioritized into ReVOII. • To support this work, 12 ReVOII hubs began operating in May 2023 in Nanaimo, Victoria, Vancouver, Surrey, New Westminster, Abbotsford, Kamloops, Kelowna, Cranbrook, Prince George, Williams Lake and Terrace. The ReVOII hubs serve all communities within the province.

- The BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) assigned dedicated Crown Counsel and professional staff to its High Risk Offender Identification Program, and five newly created Regional ReVOII prosecution teams. The Regional prosecution teams include dedicated Crown Counsel who make decisions about charge assessment and, where appropriate, conduct the bail hearings and prosecutions involving individuals prioritized into ReVOII. The Regional prosecution teams also provide criminal law advice to law enforcement.
- BCPS made system enhancements to permit improved tracking and reporting on ReVOII prioritized individuals and to enhance information available to prosecutors for use at charge assessment, bail, trial and sentencing.
- The goals of ReVOII include early intervention in cases involving prioritized individuals, and improved information sharing from investigative agencies to Crown Counsel, helping Crown Counsel to make better informed decisions about charge assessments and prosecutions. ReVOII assists Crown Counsel in making more effective decisions and court submissions about bail and sentencing, which can reduce the risk prioritized individuals pose to the community.
- ReVOII also focuses on helping prioritized individuals interrupt the cycle of reoffending, improving justice system responses to immediate public safety concerns, and holding prioritized individuals more accountable through enhanced community supervision, case management, and release planning for those transitioning from custody into the community. ReVOII also helps prioritized individuals who identify as Indigenous to gain access to available culturally appropriate supports, and to much needed mental health and addictions treatment by engaging community stakeholders and service providers.
- ReVOII's multi-agency response ensures that prioritized individuals are continuously monitored from investigation, charge assessment, bail, trial or plea, and sentencing, through to enhanced release planning and ongoing case management of community supervision orders.

ReVOII Crown Counsel continue to fulfill their constitutional obligations to act as independent ministers of justice, applying the governing law and BCPS policies, including the revised BCPS bail policy and recent amendments to the *Criminal Code*. ReVOII Crown Counsel also continue to apply the law and principles governing the BCPS Indigenous Justice Framework to cases involving prioritized individuals who identify as Indigenous.

Use effective engagement with key stakeholders and aggressive innovation in relation to technology, rules, and citizen-oriented processes to improve access to justice and reduce costs, increase speed, and deliver independent and impartial justice and dispute resolution.

In Progress - The Court Digital Transformation Strategy (2024-2029) seeks to create a more responsive, transparent, and user-friendly court system for all participants by enhancing access to justice through innovation and leveraging technologies that facilitate more effective and efficient interactions with the court system. Collaboration with court users, stakeholders, and the judiciary will ensure that the needs and insights of all court users and justice sector partners will be considered.

Other justice modernization initiatives continue to move forward, with a focus on achieving enhanced online, integrated, and efficient citizen experiences:

- Continued modernization of applications to provide:
 - easier access to justice services and court materials,
 - increased accessibility and more time efficient citizen experience,
 - automation of court form submission and eliminating manual data entry,
 - improved technical infrastructure that enables expansion to more digital services.
- Increased availability and improved reliability of virtual proceedings, including secure access to court materials, and enhanced court and infrastructure/connectivity.
- Full implementation of virtual bail technology at all police detachments across B.C., including completion of the final 36 installations.
- Improved access to justice and timely resolution of matters through improvements to and creation of new technology and use of human centered design.
- Expansion of Online Booking functionality to include additional proceeding types for superior courts.
- Further expansion and enhancements to the court services scheduling technology to streamline operations and enhance business intelligence.
- Continued modernization of Court of Appeal courtrooms incorporating ergonomics, accessibility, environmental and technological functionality.
- Enhance and implement new technology for administrative justice tribunals to improve citizen access and experience for more timely resolution.
- Less costly and adversarial resolution options for citizen issues, including family justice, housing, and small claims matters.
- Collaborated with BC Courthouse Libraries Society (BCCLS) in implementing a one-year pilot offering no fee access to Court Services Online eSearch functionality at over 90 Public

	Access Computers in BCCLS across the province. Librarians are trained on how to use CSO to assist clients in completing forms and seeking file information. 59 courthouses now have robust courtroom WiFi connectivity for both public and IDIR authenticated court participants to facilitate access to material in the courtroom. In Progress - JSB is working on improvements to the BC Bylaw Adjudication Program, to enhance operations and service delivery. The use of the bylaw adjudication program eliminates the role of courts and court registries in the administration and hearing of minor bylaw disputes (fines less than \$500). Users have found the program simplifies the dispute process, reduces ticket dispute time, and is convenient.
Work with Indigenous communities and leadership consistent with the BC First Nations Justice Strategy and Métis Justice Strategy to reduce Indigenous over-representation in the justice system and promote safety and security in Indigenous communities across the province.	In progress – The BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy), was signed on March 6, 2020, and an implementation workplan was approved by Cabinet in July 2021. Since then, there has been significant progress made on the Strategy. Strategy 4: Establishing a Network of Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC's): BCFNJC has opened 15 IJC's in Burns Lake/Hazleton, Chilliwack, Cranbrook, Fort St. John, Kamloops, Kelowna, Merritt, Nanaimo, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Port Hardy, Surrey, Vancouver, Victoria, and Williams Lake. The Fort St. John IJC is still in recruitment phase. The network of IJC's is supported by a Virtual IJC which provides services to individuals who do not have access to an in-person IJC in their community. The IJC's provide criminal and child protection legal services, with wraparound supports to Indigenous people in a culturally safe way. Strategy 6: Implement a comprehensive Gladue strategy supported by a dedicated First Nations controlled Gladue implementation agency: On April 1, 2021, BCFNJC took on delivery of Gladue Services from Legal Aid BC, and have continued to deliver Gladue services annually. There is also work towards transition planning for Strategy 5: Transitioning Indigenous Legal Aid Services to an Indigenous controlled entity happening in 2025/26, and the full transition is expected to take 7-10 years to complete. The Métis Justice Strategy was endorsed by the Province in June 2024. Since endorsement, the ministry has been collaborating with Métis Nation BC to develop a detailed implementation plan which will support the advancement of the Métis Justice Strategy over the coming years.

Support the work of the Declaration Act Secretariat to align BC laws with the rights of Indigenous peoples.

The Ministry continues to enhance and strengthen its work in this area - applying a reconciliation lens to all of our work, and in particular to the development of policy and the province's legislation. With responsibility for over 135 statutes, all projects are analyzed in the context of the Declaration Act, ensuring laws align with the UN Declaration. Some examples include working with Nations directly to identify barriers to the enforcement of their laws and to identify ways that BC law can support the enforcement of Nation laws. The Ministry also works with the federal government on national efforts to implement the UN Declaration and human rights matters.

For example, the Ministry has engaged extensively with Indigenous peoples in a project modernizing BC's Family Law Act. The Ministry has met with Indigenous people around the province who support or have lived experience of family law matters to identify how the Family Law Act can reflect and make space for Indigenous family structures, traditional practices and protocols. Relationship building, ongoing dialogue, progress updates and collaboration on changes to policy and language are key aspects of this work. The Ministry continues to keep FNLC, MNBC, the Alliance of BC Modern Treaty Nations, and other partners updated with our engagements and will continue to communicate with them as we move into the legislative process.

Protect British Columbians from unfair healthcare costs and ensure accountability for wrongdoers by identifying opportunities to recover expenses.	The Ministry has undertaken several initiatives to hold wrongdoers accountable: 1. TOBACCO BC has reached a historic resolution of the tobacco litigation with an agreement by the Tobacco companies to pay at least \$3.69 billion dollars comprised of an upfront payment of approximately \$900m with the balance paid in subsequent annual payments over approximately 18 years. 2. OPIOIDS A) BC has successfully defeated a constitutional challenge to the Opioids Damages and Healthcare Costs Recovery Act (ORA) with the Supreme Court of Canada finding the innovative approach of a “multi-crown class proceeding” is an appropriate and constitutionally valid response to a widespread, border crossing epidemic such as the Opioids crisis. B) BC was successful in having the BCSC certify the proposed Opioids Class Action as a Class Action and BC was appointed the Representative Plaintiff of all federal, provincial and territorial governments. There have been 16 appeals of this certification decision filed, and we are actively seeking to case manage them and bring them collectively to the BC Court of Appeal for hearing. 3. FOREVER CHEMICALS A) BC has commenced a proposed multi-crown class proceeding for the harms caused by “forever chemicals”. 4. HCCRA CLAIMS The Health Care Costs Recovery Act team at LSB continues to pursue wrongdoers for the health care costs they cause BC, recovering several million dollars annually. 5. CROSS BORDER HARMS A) The LSB team continues to engage with co-counsel in the United States to obtain information on other possible claims and corporate wrongdoing that may lead to healthcare costs in BC. B) The LSB team continues to engage in outreach with USA State Attorneys General to seek to develop relationships with an eye towards more collaborative action against corporate wrongdoers who create or are engaged in “cross border harms” that result in health care costs to BC.
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Work with the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General to ensure safe access for British Columbians of all religious backgrounds to their places of worship.	Justice Services Branch has provided an information briefing note to the Attorney General outlining considerations if a legislative approach were taken and are awaiting further direction.
Work with the Cabinet Committee on Community Safety to ensure that initiatives identified by the committee are prioritized and delivered by your ministry as required.	IJS is in the process of facilitating a series of targeted community engagements regarding First Nations' community safety with Sts'ailes, Musqueam, Ahousaht, Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nations, T'k'emlúps te Secwépemc, and Heiltsuk to jointly develop Community Safety Project Plans with each of them. These plans are aimed at increasing Community Safety, which will require cross-ministry coordination and actions aimed at addressing enforcement of law issues. IJS established an ADM First Nations Community Safety Committee to begin work by assessing and recommending actions related to the Community Safety Project Plans jointly developed by the IJS and six pilot First Nations and Heiltsuk. JSB is working with PSSG, supporting CCCS, to inform the committee's scope of work. Based on the current proposal, at a minimum, the planned review of the two specialized courts in Vancouver (i.e., bluesky review) could be coordinated and guided through the CCCS process, and in turn inform the province's approach to specialized courts. The work is also likely to support coordinated response to specific communities, including those requesting specialized courts.
With support from the Parliamentary Secretary on Gender Equity, continue work to ensure that the justice system is responsive to the needs of survivors of gender-based violence.	The ministry continues to work with the Parliamentary Secretary, as well as others across government to increase the responsiveness of the justice system. Current activities include: • Ongoing participation with the Gender Based Violence Action Plan and the Child and Youth Wellbeing Plan. • Ongoing participation on several federal /provincial / territorial committees, including those focused on criminal, family and human rights – all of which regularly engage with issues relating to GBV. • Dr Kim Stanton's systemic review of the province's treatment of victims and survivors of sexual assault and IPV in the criminal, civil and family legal systems. A final report is expected in June 2025.

- With funding from the federal Justice Partnership and Innovation Program, the ministry is leading the Safe Supports project. This project is implementing, monitoring and evaluating prototype programs to improve the experience of families who have been impacted by IPV as they navigate the family law system. The project includes family court support worker services in five primarily rural, remote and Northern locations to provide wrap around services.
- The ministry is conducting a review of the Family Law Act, including the various ways in which the act addresses family violence.
- Family Justices Services Division (FJSD) has staff across the province in 25 locations providing in person and virtual services to support families going through separation and divorce, including those experiencing violence. FJSD puts great emphasis on ensuring staff have specialized knowledge about the dynamics of family violence (including coercive control) and its effect on families and children. Staff are specially trained and skilled at identifying and responding to these issues in practice, including determinations related to the appropriateness of dispute resolution services.
- In February 2024, British Columbia announced \$29.1M over three years to expand financial eligibility for family legal aid services, improve intake capacity and create a new multidisciplinary trauma-informed family law clinic for people experiencing family violence. The Family Law Centre opened in December 2024, and provides legal representation and related services, both in person and virtually, to meaningfully stabilize eligible client's legal situations.
- JSB is the lead in the BC Government on international and domestic human rights. This includes the promotion and the coordination of BC's implementation efforts on seven United Nations human rights treaties, including the *Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), that recognizes freedom from violence is a human right.
- JSB is currently working with the federal government and other provinces and territories on the potential federal ratification of the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women*, better known as Belém do Pará. The Belém do Pará is an international instrument adopted by the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States. It is the first legally binding international treaty that criminalizes all forms of violence against women, especially sexual violence. BC is

	waiting for a formal letter from the federal government to the AG in order for BC to begin the process of seeking Cabinet approval. This item is on the BC GBV Action Plan. • On January 29, 2024, the <i>Intimate Images Protection Act</i> came into force. The legislation, in partnership with the Intimate Images Protection Service, provides civil legal redress to victims and survivors of the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, a devastating form of sexualized, gender-based violence. This work is included in the Gender-based violence Action Plan. • JSB staff are participating in a Uniform Law Conference of Canada working group regarding the use of non-disclosure agreements in cases of harassment and discrimination, including cases of sexual harassment and discrimination. The working group is preparing model legislation in this space.
With support from your Parliamentary Secretary, lead work on anti-racism initiatives.	• The Ministry of Attorney General, supported by the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives, is leading the implementation of the Anti-Racism Data Act (ARDA) and the Anti-Racism Act (ARA), which together establish measures to collect race-based data, identify systemic inequities, and hold the government accountable for eliminating systemic racism in British Columbia. • The establishment of the Provincial Committee on Anti-Racism (PCAR) directly supports the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives by providing expert advice and guidance on systemic racism and racial equity, informing provincial policies, and assisting in the development of the Provincial Anti-Racism Action Plan. • The Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives supports community-led anti-racism efforts, including the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network and grants for local organizations, ensuring that community voices shape anti-racism policies and actions. • The Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives supports meaningful consultation and engagement with racialized communities and Indigenous partners, ensuring their experiences and priorities directly shape the development and implementation of the Anti-Racism Action Plan.

Work with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to fight the rise in discrimination and related hate crimes.

- BCPS independently updated its Hate Crimes policy (HAT 1) on February 16, 2024, which recognizes that hate crime provisions have not been applied with equal vigor to all identifiable groups historically, particularly those subjected to hate because of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. HAT 1 requires Crown Counsel to consider invoking the hate crime provisions whenever an identifiable group or one of its members has been targeted, including these groups that have not historically received the same level of protection or attention.
- Two focused engagement sessions have been held with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to discuss steps that could be taken at the provincial level following changes to the Criminal Code in 2022 to ban conversion therapy in Canada.
- Due to the potential negative impacts that the geopolitical environment has on transgender youth, staff continue to monitor the situation as well as any changes to the Criminal Code or other potential federal legislation.
- In 2024, QMUNITY opened BC's first pro-bono 2SLGBTQIA+ legal clinic which offers services tailored to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities including free legal help with issues such as housing, employment and family law. The Province provided \$800,000 to QMUNITY to support the opening of the legal clinic.
- The Province has also provided \$800,000 to Catherine White Holman Wellness Centre (CWHWC). CWHWC provides low-barrier wellness and legal services to Two-Spirit, transgender and gender non-conforming people in a way that is respectful and celebratory of clients' identity and self-expression.

Continue work to strengthen consumer protection in BC.	On February 25, 2025, government introduced Bill 4, the <i>Business Practices and Consumer Protection Amendment Act</i>. Key proposed changes in the legislation will: • require businesses to provide important contract terms up front, including improved remedies for consumers related to renewal, cancellation, return and refund policies, particularly for online orders, bringing more transparency to pre-purchase contracts; • introduce notification requirements for automatic subscription renewals and restrict significant contract changes without the customer's consent; • prohibit contract terms that restrict participation in class-action lawsuits, restrict consumer reviews or require private arbitration for disputes; • ban direct sales of high-cost household products, such as air conditioners and furnaces, and prohibit offering credit as part of a direct sale, reducing the risk of predatory sales tactics; • provide clearer pathways for consumers to cancel contracts under specified conditions; • and give consumers the ability to use the Civil Resolution Tribunal to seek damages for a breach under the BPCPA.
Work with you to ensure British Columbians have effective tools to fight all types of racism, discrimination, and hate crimes through civil and criminal laws and processes.	• JSB is responsible for the <i>Human Rights Code</i> that protects against several grounds of discrimination and hate in employment, housing, services commonly available to the public, and publications, including online hate. • In 2018, changes to the Code established the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner as an independent officer of the Legislature. Under the Code, the Commissioner is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in our province. While the Commissioner is independent, JSB staff meet with their Research and Policy Team to ensure good communication and coordination where possible. • BCPS participates in the new Federal-Provincial-Territorial Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials Working Group on Hate Crimes (created in 2024) considering proposed amendments to the <i>Criminal Code</i> hate crime provisions to ensure they appropriately address the hate proliferating in our communities. • The Provincial K-12 Anti-Racism in Education Action Plan, released in January 2023, integrates anti-racism principles into school curricula, training for educators, and reporting mechanisms. • The Anti-Racism Act (ARA) represents a whole-of-government approach to dismantling systemic racism in BC by embedding anti-racism principles across ministries, policies, and service delivery.

	• The Racist Incident Helpline, launched in May 2024, is a trauma-informed, multilingual service that provides a culturally safe platform for witnesses and victims of hate to report incidents and access referrals to community support programs, including counseling, reinforcing the province's commitment to building a safer and more inclusive society. • The Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network delivers a strategic, community-led response to racism and hate through local and regional initiatives, operating under a Hub and Spoke model where a central hub supports 35 spoke organizations leading anti-racism and anti-hate efforts in 40 communities across the province. • Enacted in June 2022, the Anti-Racism Data Act was developed collaboratively by the Ministry of Attorney General and the Ministry of Citizens' Services to help dismantle systemic racism by enabling the collection and use of demographic data such as race, gender, and ancestry. This data helps identify barriers and improve access to government programs and services for Indigenous and racialized people, with implementation guided by Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee.
Work across ministries to ensure we are responsive to the issues identified through the Anti Racism Data Act efforts established under the last government and support the Minister to implement the Anti-Racism Act.	• The Provincial Anti-Racism Action Plan, set for in June 2026, will outline measures to eliminate Indigenous-specific racism through a distinctions-based, government-to-government approach with Indigenous partners and remove systemic barriers affecting racialized communities in accessing government services and programs. • Ministries are working to embed anti-racism policies across public bodies, with consultation and cooperation with Indigenous partners and engagement with racialized communities to ensure their perspectives shape policy and service delivery. • Measurable targets and performance indicators will be developed to track progress in eliminating systemic racism, ensuring government accountability across ministries and public institutions.



January 16, 2025

Honourable Niki Sharma
Attorney General and Deputy Premier
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Attorney General Sharma:

Congratulations on your appointment as Attorney General and Deputy Premier at a critical time for our province. Serving as a member of the executive council is a privilege and responsibility which I am confident you will fulfill with integrity and a commitment to the people of our province.

British Columbians have trusted us with a mandate to deliver for them in ways that make a tangible difference in their daily lives. They expect us to listen and learn from people of different perspectives – and work together to make things better for everyone.

Specifically, we will tackle the challenges people worry about at the kitchen table:

- **Grow the economy by creating good jobs across British Columbia.** We will collaborate with businesses, workers, and communities to attract investments in both new and traditional sectors as well as emerging sectors of the economy. This approach will bring certainty for business, security for workers, and generate the wealth needed to support the essential services British Columbians rely on.
- **Reduce costs for families** including by helping people access homes they can afford through support for first-time homebuyers, increasing the supply of rental housing stock, and stronger measures to crack down on housing speculation.

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- **Strengthen health care** by expanding access to family doctors and recruiting and training more health professionals, ensuring that every British Columbian can access the care they need, no matter where they live. We will also increase access to addictions treatment and provide help for people whose struggles require intensive supports.
- **Make our neighbourhoods and communities safer** by working with law enforcement and social agencies to address street disorder, crack down on organized crime, and do all we can to ensure repeat offenders stay behind bars.

Our commitment to take action on climate change remains foundational and will be key to a healthy and prosperous BC for future generations.

Underlying all this work is our partnership with Indigenous peoples. Advancing reconciliation, implementing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and working in partnership with First Nations rights-holders to advance shared interests is the responsibility of every Minister.

Over this mandate I expect you to prioritize making progress on the following:

- In order to protect key services that British Columbians rely on, work with the Minister of Finance to review all existing Ministry of Attorney General programs and initiatives to ensure programs remain relevant, are efficient, and speed up court and tribunal processes including judgment enforcement. This is important in the context of current Provincial budget constraints and overall efficiency.
- Ensure strong and safe communities for everyone across the province by aggressively pushing the federal government for continuing legal reform and cooperation with the province that will ensure violent and prolific offenders remain in custody after arrest.
- Use effective engagement with key stakeholders and aggressive innovation in relation to technology, rules, and citizen-oriented processes to improve access to justice and reduce costs, increase speed, and deliver independent and impartial justice and dispute resolution.
- Work with Indigenous communities and leadership consistent with the *BC First Nations Justice Strategy* and *Métis Justice Strategy* to reduce Indigenous over-representation in the justice system and promote safety and security in Indigenous communities across the province.
- Support the work of the Declaration Act Secretariat to align BC laws with the rights of Indigenous peoples.

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- Protect British Columbians from unfair healthcare costs and ensure accountability for wrongdoers by identifying opportunities to recover expenses.
- Work with the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General to ensure safe access for British Columbians of all religious backgrounds to their places of worship.
- Work with the Cabinet Committee on Community Safety to ensure that initiatives identified by the committee are prioritized and delivered by your ministry as required.
- With support from the Parliamentary Secretary on Gender Equity, continue work to ensure that the justice system is responsive to the needs of survivors of gender-based violence.
- With support from your Parliamentary Secretary, lead work on anti-racism initiatives.
- Work with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to fight the rise in discrimination and related hate crimes.
- Continue work to strengthen consumer protection in BC.

To assist you in meeting the commitments we have made to British Columbians, you are assigned a Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives whose focus will be to:

- Work with you to ensure British Columbians have effective tools to fight all types of racism, discrimination, and hate crimes through civil and criminal laws and processes.
- Work across ministries to ensure we are responsive to the issues identified through the *Anti Racism Data Act* efforts established under the last government and support the Minister to implement the *Anti-Racism Act*.

You will work closely together and ensure your Parliamentary Secretary receives appropriate support to deliver on this work.

As you are aware, we have established an accord with the BC Green Caucus that supports our shared commitment to ensuring stable governance focused on delivering progress and tangible outcomes for British Columbians. The commitments in that accord complement the direction in these mandate letters.

As a Cabinet, we will uphold the highest standards of ethics, collaboration, and good conduct in service of the public, and as a Minister of the Crown, you are expected to

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review, understand, and act according to the *Members' Conflict of Interest Act*. 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. Your Minister's Office must meet the highest standards for integrity and provide a respectful, rewarding environment for all staff.

The work we have ahead takes place in a profoundly challenging geopolitical environment. Close friends and neighbours to our south are contemplating imposing draconian tariffs on our products that would hurt both Americans and Canadians. Our allies internationally face governmental instability. Hate and racism are on the rise around the world. Artificial intelligence breakthroughs with unclear implications and astonishing potential are announced daily. Global inflation, snarled supply chains, and war are threatening global economic growth and prosperity as well as the transition to a low-carbon economy.

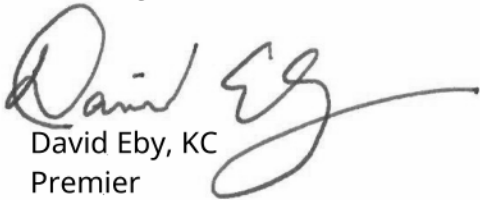
We have an obligation to protect and defend British Columbians, as well as seize opportunities, in these uncertain times.

The good news is that we have everything we need to succeed, and we will succeed. British Columbia's people – our workers, entrepreneurs, business leaders, artists, and innovators – are among the most talented in the world. We are home to world-class educational institutions and public services. Our natural beauty is unmatched, we have internationally envied resources, and we are one of the most diverse places on the planet. Your job is to help us leverage these advantages in perilous times.

Use this mandate letter to guide your work, and do not be afraid to challenge assumptions, or be innovative, bold and aggressive in achieving the goals set out for you and your Ministry by the people of this province.

Thank you for joining me in the work ahead.

Sincerely,



David Eby, KC
Premier

cc: Jessie Sunner, MLA
Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: February 26, 2025.

Budget 2025 Overview – Key Messages

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Budget 2025 is investing \$22.9 million to continue strengthening the justice system by further enhancing processes and services to make it easier to navigate the justice system:
 - \$10.347 million for Shared Recovery Wage Mandate (SRM) labour agreement increases.
 - \$4.209 million to provide for new staff to support the increased Superior Court Judicial Complement as a result of vacancies being filled.
 - \$2.637 million for Mental Health Act Rights Advice services.
 - \$1.500 million for increased security for the Vancouver Law Courts.
 - \$1.479 million for Virtual Bail related costs.
 - \$1.992 million to support various initiatives of the ministry including Sheriffs' support, Superior Court operations, French Divorce proceedings, the activities of the Investigations Standards Office, and Executive Support Services.
- The increase also includes decisions made in prior years including:
 - \$0.764 million increase primarily from Budget 2024 decisions to support Shared Recovery Mandate (SRM), Family Legal Aid, and Early Resolution Model expansion.
- The Budget 2025 provides funding for an additional 31 FTEs including:
 - 28 FTEs to support Superior Court Judges
 - 3 FTEs to support French Divorce Proceedings

Contact: Alex Chandler, ADM, Corporate Management Service Branch	Mobile: 778 698-1542
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: May 8, 2025

Economic Stabilization (Tariff Response) Act

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Government heard British Columbians' concerns about the future of our Province if the actions of foreign jurisdictions go unchecked.
- The *Economic Stabilization (Tariff Response) Act* responds to the unprecedented threats to B.C.'s economy. These uncertain times require adaptable tools that allow for decisive action should it become necessary.
- The legislation will enable government to act quickly to protect the Province's economic interests in response to the rapidly evolving, unpredictable threat of tariff and trade wars.
- The key elements of the legislation include:
 - Mechanisms to reduce or eliminate interprovincial trade barriers in Part 1. This Part does not require reciprocity from other provinces, as Government recognizes the need to move quickly to eliminate these barriers.
 - Part 2 contains procurement provisions that give direction to public entities in B.C. in procuring goods and services, including by preferring local vendors. This will direct funds back into B.C.'s economy by supporting local companies. This Part also protects these public bodies through statutory immunity and indemnity when entities have acted in accordance with directives.
 - Part 3 creates a mechanism that allows Government to impose tolls, fees or charges on vehicles using certain provincial infrastructure, such as public highways and coastal ferries.
 - Amendments from the Green Party to give oversight of the administration of the Act to a select standing committee of the Legislature, and to require government to publish actions taken under the Act on a publicly accessible website (in addition to the ordinary publication of regulations).
- The tools enabled by the Act would be exercised through regulations, which allow ministries to coordinate swift responses to tariff threats that relate to their mandate and expertise.
- The bill is time limited, and will automatically repeal on May 28, 2026, unless repealed earlier by regulation. It provides Government with the ability to put forward an interim response while we develop more permanent, sustainable solutions that protect and advance our Province and its economy.

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FINANCES:

- This work is being done within existing resources.

BACKGROUND:

Project Rationale

- In February, President Trump signed an executive order that would impose tariffs on Canadian goods.
- Since that initial order, this has been a volatile and continually changing issue. President Trump's erratic and unpredictable behaviour made it clear that flexible legislative tools are required to protect British Columbia.
- The Ministry recognized the need for legislation that would allow Government to rapidly respond to threats facing our Province as a result of U.S. tariffs and other actions.
- These are unprecedented times that require flexible tools to allow our Province to grow a more self-reliant economy and defend workers and businesses.
- It is necessary for the legislation to provide regulation-making authority in order to give subject matter expert ministries the ability to respond to specific trade and tariff threats within their areas.

Project Status

- Government listened to the concerns raised regarding what was formerly Part 4 of the Act and removed these provisions from Bill 7.
- The Ministry will continue to explore options that fit the policy objectives that were expressed in Part 4 of the Act as long as threats from foreign jurisdictions continue.
- Committee of the Whole completed its review of the Bill on May 7, 2025. Third Reading is likely the week of May 12, and Royal Assent by May 29.

Consultation

- We have consulted with the various ministries impacted.
- Government provided overviews of the legislation and had discussions with First Nations Leadership Council, the Alliance of BC Modern Treaty Nations, and Métis Nation BC, and the Declaration Act Secretariat.
- We anticipate there will be further engagement with our Indigenous partners, and others in trade and economics, and other governments if actions are contemplated under the legislation.

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Limitations and Guardrails

- Time limited:
 - The Bill is time limited with an expected sunset of May 28, 2026, unless repealed sooner by regulation. Any regulations made under the Act will automatically repeal at this time as well.
- Does not impact professions subject to *Labour Mobility Act*:
 - Part 1 – which reduces interprovincial trade barriers – does not apply to occupations that are already regulated under the *Labour Mobility Act*.
- Transparency:
 - The bill requires reporting and transparency. Directives and requests for regulations will be published on publicly available website.
 - A select standing committee of the Legislature will have oversight of the administration of the Act by government.

Security Concern

Contact: Paul Craven, ADM, Justice Services Branch	Mobile:
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 28, 2025

Justice Sector and Court Modernization

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Ministry is committed to fair, equitable, and timely access to justice through technology innovation and justice reform, using a service design approach to modernize the justice sector and improve the delivery of citizen-centred services.
- Base operating funding for Court Modernization is set at \$14.368M annually from 2025/26 onward, supporting ongoing modernization efforts, inclusive of Tribunals and Court Services Branch. Capital funding and other operating funding sources are also being leveraged for modernization initiatives.
- The Court Digital Transformation Strategy (2024-2029) ("the Strategy") seeks to create a more responsive, transparent, and user-friendly court system for all participants by enhancing access to justice through innovation and leveraging technologies that facilitate more effective and efficient interactions with the court system. Collaboration with court users, stakeholders, and the judiciary will ensure that the needs and insights of all court users and justice sector partners are considered.
- The Court Digital Transformation Strategy (2024-2029) provides a roadmap for modernizing legacy systems and enhancing digital services that benefit the judiciary, court staff, legal professionals, and, most importantly, members of the public who interact with the justice system.
- Key digital initiatives include Application Modernization, Online Booking for the Superior Courts, Virtual Bail, on-demand services and Traffic Court Online.

FINANCES:

- Budget allocations for Courts Modernization focus on access to justice by delivering citizen-centred services in the areas of electronic filing services, on-demand access to court materials, scheduling, virtual proceeding capability, delivery, and training.
- Court Modernization Base Operating Funding by Budget and Fiscal Year in \$ Million:

Estimates Budget (\$M)	Restated 2024/25	Estimates 2025/26	Service Plan 2026/27	Service Plan 2027/28
Budget 2025 decisions		1.479	1.479	1.479
Prior Year decision	12.889	12.889	12.889	12.889
*Total Base funding (\$M)	12.889	14.368	14.368	14.368

**Base operating funding to support ongoing activity to modernize and improve access to the justice system.*

Funding includes virtual court, court fees and fines management, Wi-Fi implementation, Traffic Court Online and Virtual Bail. Capital funding and other operating funding for some initiatives listed below are not included in these figures.

BACKGROUND: Over the past four years, many improvements have been made in digital service delivery, application enhancements, and the enablement of virtual appearances. Future expansion/enhancements are subject to availability and approval to access capital funding.

Initiatives include:

- **Application Modernization** – Automating court form submission and eliminating manual data entry, with improved infrastructure to enable digital services. Over 15,000 individual forms have been processed via new guided pathway and automated e-Filing services in the last year via applications such as the Online Divorce Assistant, Apply for a Family Law Act Order, AI Reviewer.
- **Access to Court Materials (ACM)** – Uses the digital BC Wallet and verifiable credentials to allow secure access to systems and information. For example, Family Duty Counsel can prove both who they are and that they are a lawyer in good standing, to securely access Provincial Family Court documents. Over 1,400 lawyers have the Law Society Membership credential in their BC Wallet. Lawyers execute over 100,000 searches per year within ACM, providing real time access to information to assist the most in need across the province. Leveraging the foundation built using ‘Justice Modernization’ funding, the service continues to expand with CSB operating funding.
- **Enhanced Connectivity** – Enhancements to facility infrastructure as well as network capacity and reliability including Wi-Fi expansion and network bandwidth improvement in all staffed courthouses province wide. Public Wi-Fi has been implemented in 58 courthouses across the province, located in courtrooms, public areas, barristers' lounges, conference rooms, and witness rooms. Proactive network performance and uptime have been instrumental in increasing network stabilization.
- **Virtual Appearances** – Enabled in criminal, civil, and family proceedings in all three levels of court throughout the province, as well as for matters involving provincial boards and

tribunals. In 2019, the proportion of trial courts' appearances in which at least one participant attended virtually was 17% (approximately 132,000 virtual appearances). In 2024, the portion of appearances where at least one person attended virtually rose to 56% (almost 411,000 virtual appearances). Virtual appearances for additional proceeding types and traditionally in-person counter services are in various stages of pilot and/or funding submission.

- **Virtual Bail Initiative** – The Virtual Bail Initiative supports timely, effective bail hearings that aim to reduce community displacement. Accused appear virtually, with the impact of reducing what is sometimes significant time in custody and long-distance transportation for the purpose of a bail hearing. Judges, court staff and lawyers are no longer geographically bound and can appear virtually in multiple jurisdictions on the same day. Province wide implementation has created a more resilient justice system that can better adapt to extreme events like wildfires, flooding, and pandemics. The pre-pandemic number of video conferencing units, supplied and supported by CSB has increased by 70% at the end of 2024/25. Virtual Bail technology has been deployed at 102 police detachments across BC with the completion of the final 36 installations underway.
- **Traffic Court Online** – tickets.gov.bc.ca provides citizens with information and tools for self-resolution and as of April 2024, allows citizens to initiate traffic violation ticket disputes online. Courts and judiciary now use a portal as a part of a streamlined digitized workflow, creating a foundation for further digitization of court processes.
- **Scheduling** (note mixture of dedicated Justice Modernization capital and CSB operating).
 - **Online Booking for Superior Courts** – Online booking system provides a more efficient and equitable process for court users to submit booking requests for Chambers, hearings, conferences and trials.
 - **Court Services Scheduling enhancements** – Continued development of court services web-based applications to streamline operations, enhance business intelligence and automate reminders/notifications. Examples include Sheriff and Interpreter scheduling applications.

Contact: Paul Craven, ADM, Justice Services Branch Jenny Manton, ADM, Court Services Branch	Mobile: Personal Security Mobile: Personal Security
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 03, 2025

BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner - Hate Report and Ministry Response

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- In March 2023, The Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (the Commissioner) released the report: *From Hate to Hope: Inquiry into Hate in the COVID-19 Pandemic*.
- The Report included recommendations categorized into three themes: (1) Understanding hate and acknowledging its harm, (2) Building safety and belonging, and (3) Fostering accountability and repairing harm.
- Government takes the work of combating hate in British Columbia seriously and is engaged in this work through several avenues across multiple Ministries. Achievements that the Ministry of Attorney General (MAG) is involved in include:
 - The creation of an intersectional framework to coordinate, collaborate and lead responses to hate among six government branches.
 - The *Anti-Racism Act* received royal assent in May 2024. This act introduced a Provincial Committee on Anti-Racism who advise on matters of systemic racism.
 - The Racist Incident Helpline, launched in May 2024, provides support to victims, survivors, and witnesses of incidents of hate.
 - In February 2024, the BC Prosecution Service announced that their Hate Crimes policy (HAT 1) has been revised to include a definition of “hate crimes”. It also provides advice and guidance on hate crime offences and hate crimes targeting Indigenous Victims and Communities.
 - Funding and support provided to restorative justice programs, the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network, and for victims' service and violence against women programs per the “Safe and Supported: British Columbia’s Gender-Based Violence Action Plan”. This work includes support for new Indigenous-led initiatives.

FINANCES:

- Funding for responsive programs is detailed in program-specific notes.

STATISTICS:

- MAG has primary responsibility for 11 recommendations and sub-recommendations, as well as shared responsibility with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (PSSG) for another 11 recommendations and sub-recommendations.
- Of the MAG-led recommendations, 54% (6/11) are assessed as partially implemented, 27% (3/11) are assessed as fully implemented and 18% (2/11) are not yet implemented.

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- Both recommendations that have not been implemented require broad legislative analysis in consideration of amending the *Human Rights Code*. Those recommendations involve:
 - Including social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination, and
 - Legislatively broadening the Commissioner's mandate to include oversight of the responsive work stemming from this report.

BACKGROUND:

- In 2024 the MAG provided the Commissioner with two updates on the work identified as responsive to the report recommendations. The second update was provided in coordination with PSSG.

Intergovernmental Communications

- For additional information on this topic, reference the following MAG Estimates Notes:
 - Prosecuting Hate Crimes (Tab 12)
 - Declaration Act Action Plan (Tab 27)
 - British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal (Tab 38)
 - Anti-Racism Legislation (Tab 58)
 - Anti-Racism Data Act (Tab 59)
 - Racist Incident Helpline (Tab 63)
 - Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network (Tab 64)

Personal Security

Contact: Paul Craven, ADM, Justice Services Branch

Mobile:

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 6, 2025

Body Worn Cameras

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Police agencies in BC have commenced the deployment of Body Worn Cameras (BWC) to front-line officers.
- BWC evidence consists of both video and audio footage and constitutes a significant increase of digital disclosure evidence for the BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) to manage.
- All relevant BWC evidence provided to the BCPS from the police must be reviewed for disclosure purposes.
- Instructions must be provided to the police regarding necessary redactions to the BWC footage and associated transcripts prepared by police must also be reviewed.
- The BCPS is assessing the impact on BCPS resources in terms of workload and time.
- BWC file data will also have an impact on the BCPS file storage footprint and associated costs.

FINANCES:

- As BWC deployment is still in its early stages and applicable data is limited, the BCPS is currently in the process of collecting data to determine resource requirements.

BACKGROUND:

- After years of planning and consideration, police in BC have commenced full-scale deployment of body worn cameras:
 - British Columbia RCMP commenced its provincial BWC rollout in November 2024, and by the end of 2025 will have deployed approximately 3500 BWC to all front-line officers.
 - Following a pilot in 2024, throughout the 2025 calendar year the Vancouver Police Department will be issuing 970 BWC to both front-line officers and non-front-line officers.
 - Some municipal police agencies are commencing BWC pilot programs in 2025 with other municipal police agencies seeking funding for, or contemplating launching, BWC pilot programs.
- The BCPS is collecting information on all BWC files with respect to the number of BWC videos submitted, the digital file size, and the length of each video to assist in assessing workload impacts.

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- BWC video evidence will also impact police with respect to digital file storage, transmission to Crown Counsel and timely transcription and redaction of BWC footage.

Contact: Grant Wong, A/Director, Legal Operations, BCPS	Mobile:	Personal Security
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 6, 2025

Conduct of Bail Hearings

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) continues to work collaboratively with the Provincial Court and justice partners in the operation of the court's daytime virtual/hybrid bail program.
- Standardized processes and remote hearings have many benefits, including:
 - Reducing prisoner movement,
 - Enhancing the capacity for the provision of legal services in remote locations,
 - Providing scheduling flexibility in all venues, and
 - A more resilient justice system that can better respond to closures or delays due to extreme events, including those related to weather, pandemics, or infrastructure outages.
- Having implemented Crown-led after-hours bail coverage (which includes weekends / holidays / weekday evenings) across the province, BCPS is now working with police on best practices to eliminate the need for any police-led bail hearings.
- As part of the Government's *Safer Communities Action Plan*, BCPS continues its deployment of dedicated regional teams of Crown Counsel and professional staff to support the *Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative* (ReVOII). ReVOII Crown Counsel make independent decisions in relation to the charge assessment involving individuals prioritized into ReVOII, and where applicable, conduct any bail hearings.
- BCPS continues to collect data on the positions Crown Counsel take on bail hearings and the resulting judicial decisions.

FINANCES:

- The Ministry of Attorney General has been provided \$6.228 million for virtual bail in Fiscal 25/26, an increase from the \$4.749 million provided in Fiscal 24/25.

BACKGROUND:

- Working with the Provincial Court and other justice partners, BCPS has completed the development and implementation of a province-wide bail program to provide Crown Counsel to deal with bail hearings during regular weekdays, regular weekday evenings, and daytime hours on weekends and statutory holidays.
- The after-hours components of this program significantly reduced the number of police-led bail hearings on weekday, weekend and holiday evenings.

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- In 2018, BCPS implemented a province-wide program to conduct Crown-led (as opposed to police-led) after-hours bail hearings during daytime hours on weekends and statutory holidays.
- During the pandemic, BCPS worked with the Provincial Court and other justice partners in the court's development and implementation of a standardized daytime virtual/hybrid virtual bail program, which was completed in the Fall of 2023.
- Starting in 2022 and completed in 2023, BCPS implemented a Crown-led after-hours bail hearing program on regular weekday evenings.

Contact: Grant Wong, A/Director, Legal Strategy, BCPS	Mobile: Personal Security
Contact: Brian Anderson, ED, Business Operations, BCPS	Mobile: Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: May 6, 2025

Prosecuting Hate Crimes

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) has made considerable progress addressing gaps in identifying and tracking hate crime files.
- The BC Human Rights Commissioner report *From Hope to Hate* (March 2023) highlighted gaps in data as cases moved through the system. While changes are technical, they will improve the application of BCPS' expanded hate crimes policy from February 2024.

Intergovernmental Communications; Security Concern

- The BCPS continues to proactively improve how it prosecutes hate crimes by conducting ongoing training for both Crown and police; engaging externally with federal and inter-provincial hate crimes initiatives; and creating new prosecution resources.

FINANCES:

- No financial impacts at this time.

BACKGROUND:

- The BCPS cannot comment on any hate-related prosecutions currently before the courts.
- The BCPS has made significant advancements in identifying and tracking hate crimes.

Updated Hate Crimes Policy and Tracking

- On February 16, 2024, the BCPS updated its Hate Crimes policy (HAT 1) and began

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- HAT 1 defines “hate crime” as: hate propaganda offences; conversion therapy offences; mischief motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate; and other *Criminal Code* offences motivated by bias, prejudice or hate pursuant to s. 718.2(a)(i).
- JUSTIN already allows for tracking via offence section number, but the majority of hate crimes prosecuted by the BCPS are other *Criminal Code* offences with the s. 718.2(a)(i) aggravating factor. Court Services Branch does not track s. 718.2(a)(i), so this is the first time it has been tracked in BC.
- Collecting s. 718.2(a)(i) data was called for by the BC Human Rights Commissioner in their 2023 report, *From hate to hope: Report of the Inquiry into hate in the COVID-19 pandemic*.

Advice/Recommendations; Personal Information

- Other *Criminal Code* offences motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate pursuant to s. 718.2(a)(i) aggravating factor:
 - BCPS considers s.718.2(a)(i) sentencing cases to be hate crimes (HAT 1).
 - Crown is required to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the offence was motivated at least in part by bias, prejudice, or hate based on a listed factor.
 - Where a sentencing judge makes the finding that an offence was motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate, it is an aggravating factor that elevates the sentence. However, the exact impact on the sentence is unknown.
 - The most common index offences are assaults (including assault with a weapon and assault causing bodily harm) and uttering threats.
 - In 2024, the groups most significantly targeted in BCPS hate crime prosecutions were race, religion, national or ethnic origin, and gender. The transgender community was also overrepresented as a target for hate crimes.
 - An accused’s hateful conduct that does not rise to the level of motivating the offence can also be aggravating on sentence at common law. BCPS does not collect data on these files.
- On February 16, 2024, the BCPS began requiring Crown Counsel who conclude a hate crime prosecution to complete a file closing questionnaire collecting detailed data, including s. 718.2(a)(i) and the identifiable group targeted (data not previously tracked).

Intergovernmental Communications

Security Concern

- In 2024, the BCPS participated in hate crimes and terrorism training with the Integrated National Security Enforcement Team, RCMP, and Shift BC in Victoria, Prince George, and Richmond. The BCPS has proactively sought federal funding for additional resources and tools to train prosecutors, including an annual 2-day knowledge exchange for hate crimes prosecutors from across Canada and the creation of a hate crime prosecutions handbook.

Reform Efforts

- The BCPS takes on a leadership role in advancing how hate crimes are prosecuted. In 2023, the BCPS founded a Canada-wide network of hate crimes prosecutors who meet virtually to share hate crimes best practices.
- Since 2024, the BCPS has been a member of the National Hate Crimes Task Force (co-chaired by the RCMP and Canadian Race Relations Foundation) and the new Federal-Provincial-Territorial Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials Working Group on Hate Crimes, studying proposed *Criminal Code* hate crime amendments.
- In her role as Attorney General, the Minister wrote her federal counterpart on February 14, 2024, recommending three amendments to the *Criminal Code* hate crime provisions: (i) including Indigeneity in the definition of “identifiable group” in s. 318(4) and factors in s. 718.2(a)(i); (ii) removing or restricting the defence of truth to the offence of wilful promotion of antisemitism found in s. 319(3.1); and (iii) considering an offence of hate-motivated insult.
- In addition to the work of the BCPS, on May 30, 2024, Government created the Racist Incident Helpline to assist people subjected to discrimination based on the colour of their skin, culture, ethnicity, or place of origin with referrals to community services or reporting to police.

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On-going Investigations and Cases

- It would not be appropriate to comment on cases that are under investigation or pending charge assessment. To do so might prejudice the work of police and the BCPS.

Contact: Carey Morgan, Crown Counsel, BCPS	Mobile: Personal Security
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: May 5, 2025

***R v. Jordan*; Judicial Stay for Unreasonable Delay**

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- On July 8, 2016, in its decision *R v Jordan*, the Supreme Court of Canada established binding timelines for the processing of criminal cases in Canada.
- Systemic delay (excluding delay attributable to the defence) that extends beyond the established timelines is presumptively “unreasonable” under s. 11(b) of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The established timeline for Provincial Court criminal cases is 18 months and the established timeline for BC Supreme Court criminal cases is 30 months.
- Unless Crown Counsel can justify systemic delay that exceeds these thresholds on the basis of “exceptional circumstances”, the constitutional right to be tried within a reasonable time is violated and the prosecution is liable to be terminated by a judge.
- The BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) has been actively working on reducing systemic delay for a number of years and continues to do everything it can to meet the timelines established by the Supreme Court of Canada in the cases it prosecutes.

FINANCES:

- N/A

STATISTICS:

- Since the release of the *Jordan* decision, there has been a general trend of fewer judicial stays in criminal cases in B.C.; however, there was an increase in 2023, back to pre-pandemic levels, and a decrease in 2024
 - (2017 – 16; 2018 – 12; 2019 – 8; 2020 – 9; 2021 – 5; 2022 – 3; 2023 – 13; 2024 – 8)
- As of the time of writing, there have been five judicial stays in 2025 of cases prosecuted by the BCPS, and one judicial stay of a case prosecuted by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

BACKGROUND:

- Starting in 2012, BCPS has implemented several process reforms that were specifically designed to address the problem of delay. These reforms were substantially completed in December 2015 and include:
 - Enhanced Crown file ownership to reduce file churn;
 - Province-wide quality standards for proactive criminal case management, including front-end disclosure and online charge assessment;
 - Increased flexibility on the use of direct indictments;

Confidential

- Implementation of a province-wide electronic file closing survey to gather business intelligence on material process and file developments; and
 - Implementation of a major case management model to bring a project management approach to the largest prosecutions.
- As part of an ongoing process of continuous improvement, the BCPS has been developing and rolling out new reforms and initiatives since 2016. These include:
 - Streamlining of administrative processes, for example, the **Administrative Business Centre**, which provides staff with centralized business documentation that is updated continuously;
 - Implementation of the **Crown Counsel Scheduling System**, which facilitates integrated electronic case scheduling with the Provincial Court and supports the long-term sustainability of Crown file ownership;
 - Implementation of the **Comprehensive Bail Program**, in which the BCPS assumed responsibility for all after-hours charge assessment and bail processes across the province; and
 - Implementation of the **Comprehensive Disclosure Strategy** aimed at increasing efficiencies and reducing delay in criminal case disclosure.
 - The most recent CDS initiative is the **Digital Evidence and Disclosure Management System (DEMS)**, which was launched in 2023 and fully implemented in 2024. DEMS is a technology platform that facilitates the end-to-end management of digital evidence and disclosure directly from police agencies to the BCPS.
- The completed reforms, coupled with its ongoing initiatives, help the BCPS to mitigate concerns about delay.

Contact: Damienne Darby, Communications Counsel, BCPS

Mobile:

Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: May 5, 2025

Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- As part of the Government's *Safer Communities Action Plan*, the Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative (ReVOII), led by BC Corrections, began serving all communities in the province by standing up twelve hubs on May 1, 2023.
- The BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) assigned dedicated Crown Counsel and professional staff to its High-Risk Offender Identification Program, and five, newly created, Regional ReVOII prosecutions teams.
- The regional prosecution teams include dedicated Crown Counsel who make decisions about charge assessment and, where appropriate, conduct the bail hearings and prosecutions involving individuals prioritized into ReVOII. The regional prosecution teams also provide criminal law advice to law enforcement.
- Since implementation, a total of 514 prioritized individuals (as of May 1, 2025) have been identified. 413 are currently prioritized and 101 have been removed from the program. Removals are based on death, extended period of inactivity, federal custody, moving out of the province, or risk mitigated/successful completion.

FINANCES:

- Funded separately under Ministry of Finance.

STATISTICS:

- Data from BC Corrections, below, provides a profile of the 413 ReVOII program participants as of May 1, 2025.
 - Average age: 37
 - Gender: 91% identify as men, 8% identify as women and 1% as non-binary.
 - Ethnicity: distribution is similar to current BC Corrections custody population (there is a slightly greater proportion of individuals who are Indigenous, Black or unknown, but fewer who are White, Asian, or South Asian).
 - On average, program participants have 4 current violent charges or convictions and 10 prior violent or related convictions.
 - 65% of ReVOII program participants have significant mental health challenges.
 - 93% of ReVOII program participants have significant substance use challenges.
 - 23% of ReVOII program participants report having stable housing at program intake. For the remainder, 45% reported having unstable housing (i.e. precarious housing conditions such as couch surfing, shelter, or being at risk for homelessness) and 32% reported being unsheltered (i.e. living in a tent or sleeping on the street).

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- 45% of ReVOII program participants have all three of significant mental health challenges, serious substance use challenges, and unsheltered or unstable housing at program intake.

BACKGROUND:

- BCPS ReVOII executive leads continue with cross-government engagement to enhance supports to ReVOII. In November 2023, dedicated Community Integration Specialists from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction began supporting ReVOII, and conversations are ongoing with the Ministry of Health.
- BC Corrections and BCPS are committed to the core principles and recommendations of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy and the Métis Justice Strategy. Consultations with the BC First Nations Justice Council are ongoing.
- Coordinated, consistent, and streamlined information sharing and dedicated resources have assisted prosecutors in making principled and informed decisions about charge assessments, bail release, and prosecutions in relation to the prioritized individuals.
- Police and probation work collaboratively, focusing on enhanced investigation, enforcement, and monitoring of prioritized individuals. If an individual is returning to the community after serving a provincial custodial sentence, enhanced release planning tailored to their unique needs occurs prior to release by dedicated correctional teams.
- ReVOII's multi-agency response ensures that prioritized individuals are continuously monitored from investigation, charge assessment, bail, trial or plea, and sentencing, through to enhanced release planning and ongoing case management of community supervision orders.
- ReVOII Crown Counsel continue to fulfill their constitutional obligations to act as independent ministers of justice, applying the governing law and BCPS policies, including the revised BCPS bail policy and recent amendments to the *Criminal Code*.
- ReVOII Crown Counsel also continue to apply the law and principles governing the BCPS Indigenous Justice Framework to cases involving prioritized individuals who identify as Indigenous.
- Qualitatively, ReVOII appears to be having a positive impact, interrupting the cycle of offending, improving justice system responses, and hold prioritized individuals more accountable.
- Work is underway to review collected ReVOII data and measurements to report out on program effectiveness.

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 6, 2025

Special Prosecutions

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Special Prosecutors are appointed when the Assistant Deputy Attorney General considers it in the public interest to do so, usually to avoid any potential for real or perceived improper influence in the administration of justice.
- Special Prosecutors are senior lawyers external to government who are able to make their decisions independently of both government and the BC Prosecution Service.
- The list of Special Prosecutors is confidential.
- In order to protect the integrity and independence of the Special Prosecutor system, it would not be appropriate to comment on, or discuss, any ongoing matter that is being managed by a Special Prosecutor.

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 6, 2025

Funding For Court Operations

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Budget 2025 provides new funding to address pressures in the Court Services Branch (CSB).
- This funding includes support for:
 - The expansion of the BC Supreme Court's judicial complement by five justices,
 - Implementation of French Language divorce hearings and registry services,
 - Security costs to improve safety at 222 Main St,
 - Sheriff pressures for building space at Riverview, and
 - Salaries and benefits costs for the 2024 cost of living adjustment under the collective agreement.
- The ministry continues to manage funding pressures related to ongoing cost increases for operational travel, facilities operations, maintenance for expanding IMIT systems and other caseload pressures.

FINANCES:

- Budget 2025 include funding increases of \$5.144 million (3.30%) and 10 full time equivalent (FTEs) for the following items:
 - BC Supreme Court Expansion: \$1.173/7 FTEs has been allocated to CSB to provide court clerks for hearings, sheriffs for hearings and prisoner transport, and registry clerks for the increased court file processing.
 - French Divorce: \$0.251M/3 FTEs has been allocated to CSB to implement French language divorce hearings in the BC Supreme Court. This funding includes support for French language hearings and French language registry services.
 - Enhanced security: \$1.5M/0 FTEs which includes enhanced security for CSB employees and other justice partners at 222 Main St. CSB will be able to continue support services to address the security risks at the courthouse. The Ministry has implemented shuttle van services to and from the sky-train station, a safewalk program, a safe parking location, enhanced private security service and overtime to support these services, which are available before and after normal business hours.
 - Sheriff Pressures: \$0.400M/0 FTEs to support building occupancy costs on the Riverview site. This space is being used for the provincial operations centre which manages sheriff fleet vehicles, the training program, and prisoner movements.

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- Salaries and benefits: \$1.754M/0 FTEs which will fund the 2024 Cost of Living Adjustment under the collective agreement and sheriff compensation adjustments. These costs were previously funded through contingencies in the 2024/25 fiscal year.
- Other prior year decisions: \$0.066 million/0 FTEs for court transcription, court interpreters, to complete creation of a Supreme Court registry in Port Coquitlam, and to support sheriff operations at the expanded Nanaimo Correctional Centre. These funding lifts were approved in Budget 2024.
- This funding will be used to support approved service delivery growth, negotiated labour agreements, as well as supporting increased complement of Supreme Court judges.
- Budget 2025 also includes ministry funding for Virtual Bail.

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated Date: May 6, 2025

Assessment of Criminal, Family, and Civil Scheduling Timeliness

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- It is recognized that there is a need to make improvements to the timeliness of matters coming before courts and reduce delays. The Ministry has supported this area with program enhancements and technology innovations.
- The justice system has developed innovative solutions and adaptive processes that continue to provide and improve access to justice through electronic and virtual methods in both the Supreme Court and Provincial Court.
- Innovative processes such as the Virtual Counter and Traffic Court Online offer remote court registry services or ticket information and dispute options without having to visit a courthouse in person.
- In collaboration with the Provincial Court, the Early Resolution Process in Victoria, Surrey and Port Coquitlam are helping people resolve their family law matters, often without needing to go to court – significantly reducing caseload pressures. Those who do proceed to court are better prepared, making each appearance more meaningful and productive. Further locations are planned for implementation in 2025.
- The current complement of Provincial Court judges increased recently to 143.45 judicial FTEs.¹ The Supreme Court judge complement, set by statute at 95 judges plus the Chief Justice and Associate Chief Justice, had 3 vacancies². Filling judicial vacancies on the Supreme Court of BC is a federal government responsibility.

STATISTICS:

- The September 2024 Provincial Court of BC Semi-Annual Time to Trial Report showed provincial weighted times to trial decreased on average by 4% between September 2023 and 2024.
- 13 out of 17 time to trial measures exceeded Office of the Chief Judge established standards, including Criminal trials between 2-4 days long, Small Claims settlement conferences, Small Claims trials less than two days, Small Claims trials between 2-4 days long, and all types of Family trials and conferences.

¹ As of April 30, 2025, the Provincial Court of BC current complement is 143.45 JFTEs. The judge complement was as low as 135.88 JFTEs in February 2024 and has been around 140 JFTEs from April 2024 to February 2025.

² As of May 1, 2025, the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs Canada: [Federal Judicial Appointments - Number of Federally Appointed Judges in Canada](https://www.fja.gc.ca/en/federal-judicial-appointments) (fja.gc.ca) reports 3 Supreme Court vacancies and 1 Court of Appeal vacancy.

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Provincial Court - Criminal matters

- As of September 2024, the time to schedule a criminal adult trial was:
 - Less than 2 days – delay of 5.6 months (OCJ standard 6 months)
 - 2 to 4 days – delay of 7.4 months (OCJ standard 7 months)
 - 5 days or more – delay of 8.1 months (OCJ standard 8 months)
- In 2024, there were 14 Provincial Court Adult cases and zero Supreme Court cases judicially stayed due to systemic delay (i.e., Jordan stays). For 2019 to 2023, the average count was 12 cases judicially stayed due to delay per year. In comparison, for the 10-year period between 2009 to 2018, the average count was 44 cases judicially stayed due to delay per year.
- In 2025 (as of April 30, 2025), there were 5 Provincial Court Adult (1 federal Crown and 4 provincial Crown), 1 Provincial Court Youth (provincial Crown), and no Supreme Court cases judicially stayed due to unreasonable delay.

Provincial Court - Family matters

- As of September 2024, the time to schedule a Family Law Act trial was:
 - Less than 2-day trial – delay of 4.7 months (OCJ standard 4 months)
 - 2 to 4 days – delay of 6.2 months (OCJ standard 5 months)
 - 5 days or more – delay of 7.3 months (OCJ standard 6 months).
- As of September 2024, the time to schedule a child protection hearing was:
 - Less than 2 days trial - delay 4.2 months (OCJ standard 3 months)
 - 2 to 4 days - delay of 6.0 months (OCJ standard 4 months)
 - 5 days or more - delay of 7.1 months (OCJ standard 6 months).

Provincial Court - Civil matters

- As of September 2024, the time to schedule a small claims trial was:
 - Less than 2-day trial (SPC³) – delay did not exceed 3 months (OCJ standard 4 months)
 - Less than 2 days trial (non-SPC) – delay of 5.8 months (OCJ standard 5 months)
 - 2 to 4 days (non-SPC) – delay of 7 months (OCJ standard 6 months)
 - 5 days or more (non-SPC) – delay of 7.6 months (OCJ standard 8 months).

Supreme Court – Criminal, Family, and Civil

- Delays are not specifically tracked by the Supreme Court of BC; however, a proxy measure sourced from Supreme Court scheduling data shows that the time it takes to get a trial in Supreme Court is generally increasing in Supreme Civil and Supreme Family.
- Supreme Court time to trial delays in 2024/25 vary from location to location, ranging from 0.5 months to 17.8 months for civil trials and 0.77 months to 16.1 months for

³ Summary Proceedings Court

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criminal trials. Notably, comparing 2024/25 with 2023/24, the highest median time to schedule a criminal trial in Supreme Court increased by 8.0 months.

- The 2024 Annual Report – Supreme Court of British Columbia states that the ratio of matters bumped to be heard remains high. In 2024, 19.1% of all long chamber applications and 13.4% of trials were bumped. The percentage of long chambers applications bumped is an increase from 2023 levels, when the bumping rate was 16.3%.
- Though the trial bumped rate is lower than in 2023, when the rate was 15.9% , 2024 rates are higher than the 10-year average trial bumping rate of 11.4%. The Supreme Court reports that the main cause of bumping is a shortage of judges available to hear matters.

BACKGROUND:

- One indicator of timeliness is the Provincial Court Office of the Chief Judge's (OCJ) Time to Trial Update reports. The most current data is from September 30, 2024. This OCJ report is released twice a year, reporting on March and September survey results, approximately 3 months after the survey is completed. The next report is expected to be released in June/July 2025 for the March 31, 2025, time period.
- B.C. has been diligent in monitoring judicial stays due to systemic delay since the *R. v. Jordan* Supreme Court of Canada decision in 2016.
- The courts introduced several initiatives since April 2024 to reduce overall delays in the justice system including:
 - The Virtual Counter initiative allows the public to access counter-like court services virtually without the need for in-person visits, including citizens living in remote communities where travel may be difficult and time-consuming. This service has been expanded to cover all court regions across the province, allowing local registry staff to focus more on improving document processing efficiency. The virtual service, which can be accessed from anywhere in the province, is set to transition to a centralized model in Spring 2025. This shift will help CSB maintain the current level of service while reducing the strain on court administration resources, enabling staff to prioritize other critical tasks.
 - The additions of early resolution registries: Port Coquitlam registry in November 2024; Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and New Westminster registries in April 2025; and North Vancouver, Pemberton, Richmond, Sechelt, and Vancouver (Robson Square) in November 2025. Current early resolution locations, Victoria and Surrey, have shown reduced number of cases proceeding to court, improved understanding and readiness for participants, and more effective and efficient use of Court.

- The implementation of a faster electronic processing between B.C. and the Central Registry of Divorce Proceedings (CRDP) to submit divorce application information directly and retrieve clearance certificates. The CRDP advises of duplicate applications and if none are detected, the clearance certificate signals that there are no jurisdictional issues, and the divorce order can proceed.
- Modernization of technology enables the accused, Crown, counsel and judges to appear remotely at bail hearings, minimising the need to interrupt and delay trial proceedings and allowing for greater scheduling flexibility, improved communication and coordination, and efficient use of resources.
- The Access to Court Material (ACM) application uses digital credentials to provide lawyers with access to family and criminal documents; this has increased preparedness for court and the more efficient running of courtrooms such as family remand court.
- Modifications to the Supreme Court Civil and Family Rules and prescribed forms to accept affidavits commissioned via video technology for filing, to capture better information, and to improve scheduling timeliness.
- In support of survivors of intimate partner violence before, during, and after a family law case, staff search case management systems and court files to gather requested information and court documents in a timely way.
- Traffic Court Online (Tickets.gov.bc.ca) allows for the electronic disputing and administration of traffic violation tickets, providing 24-7 accessibility for citizens province-wide to traffic ticket information, to allow for better-informed decisions.
- Court transcripts are now submitted in electronic format instead of being physically couriered to court registries, improving overall efficiency and reducing delivery costs.
- Implementation of procedures for section 23.2 of the federal Divorce Act (Canada), which established that any person has the right to use either official language in any proceeding under the Divorce Act.
- Cowichan Tribes now exercise jurisdiction over child and family services for their members. This represents a landmark agreement between these Nations, our province, and the federal government. New court rules setting out the relevant procedures were co-developed with the Cowichan Tribes. These changes uphold Indigenous jurisdiction, support ongoing reconciliation efforts, and aim to address the over-representation of Indigenous children and youth in care.
- Court case tracking systems continue to implement efficiencies that eliminate the need to mail notices to court participants and email them instead. This improves

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the speed with which disputes are resolved, reduces mailing costs, and frees up staff to work on priority projects.

- Timeliness can be impacted by several factors:
 - The number and proportion of judicial resources devoted to criminal, civil, and family matters, together with the relative caseload and courtroom availability.
 - Judicial vacancies and turnover can impact judicial capacity. BC currently has 3 Supreme Court Justice vacancies.
 - Some lengthier delays can be due to a limited number of court sitting days at smaller court locations. These smaller locations cannot accommodate larger trials and have difficulties reacting to caseload fluctuations.

Other key drivers of civil and family case timeliness include capacity, participant readiness, implementation of more efficient processes, alternatives to court, and overall caseload trends.

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated Date: March 6, 2025

Courthouse Security

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The safety and security of all court users and staff is a top priority.
- BC Sheriff Service (BCSS) members are present in each courthouse to ensure the safety of all court users, located in the common areas, courtrooms, and on courthouse grounds.
- Weapons of any kind are strictly prohibited from being brought into a courthouse.
- Sheriffs consider a wide range of factors and use multiple strategies to assess and mitigate risks to court users. Resources are shifted throughout the province daily in response to changing operational and security requirements.
- Sheriffs develop and implement different security measures to reduce risk at courthouses and in courtrooms. Because of security reasons, the ministry cannot provide further details.
- It is imperative to balance the concept of open and accessible courts with courthouse safety. Imposing strict courthouse safety measures may cause intimidation for some court users and be perceived as an access to justice barrier.
- We will work closely with our partners to review security procedures for all court users and staff.

BACKGROUND:

Security at B.C. Courthouses

- Sheriffs are trained to protect court users through visible safety methods (uniformed presence, metal detectors, etc.) and other means (video surveillance, threat assessments, etc.).
- Some courthouses employ controlled access points at their entrances and/or at particular courtrooms. The employment of a controlled access point is based on Security Concern
- It is imperative to balance the concept of open and accessible courts with courthouse safety measures. Imposing strict courthouse safety measures may cause intimidation for some court users, however ensuring safety of courthouse users must also be prioritized.
- Racialized individuals, including Indigenous peoples may be intimidated by the court process already and the increase of security measures Security Concern

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- In recent years, the Sheriff Service has observed an increase in frequency of serious incidents occurring in or around courthouses.
- There are four courthouses (Surrey, Abbotsford, Vancouver Provincial and the Downtown Community Court) that have ^{Security Concern} with search gates.
- ^{Security Concern}
- In response to safety concerns raised by the legal community, in April 2024, a pamphlet and letter were sent to Canadian Bar Association, Law Society, and Trial Lawyers of BC outlining safety protocols available to lawyers in courthouses, as well as steps that should be taken if a lawyer receives threats or inappropriate communications outside the courthouse.

NOTABLE INCIDENTS:

January 7, 2025 – New Westminster Law Courts

- The New Westminster Police Department (NYPD) informed the Sheriff Service that NYPD received a credible bomb threat for the courthouse.
- The building and surrounding neighbourhood was evacuated, and sheriff staff were assigned to work in conjunction with NYPD at perimeter checkpoints.
- A joint incident command post was set up between NYPD, RCMP Emergency Response Team (ERT), New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services, and BCSS.
- ERT, bomb detection dogs and BCSS officers cleared the facility, and it was deemed safe to return.

February 2, 2024 – 222 Main Street Courthouse (Vancouver Provincial Court)

- Two women were assaulted in the DTES – Chinatown area by an individual. One of the victims was a Crown prosecutor, on the way to work from the parking garage to the 222 Main Street courthouse, escorted by a private security guard. There was no evidence to suggest that the attack was connected to her occupation), and her destination (the courthouse). It appears to have been a random attack.
- BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) employees may be escorted by sheriffs, uniformed private security guard or plain clothes BCPS in-house security employees.
- The BC Crown Counsel Association has asserted that the Vancouver Provincial Court should be moved away from the DTES to a safer location.
- The additional security measures implemented at 222 Main Street in 2022 remain in place (see incident information from September 14, 2022 below).

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December 8, 2023 – Vancouver Law Courts

- Security at British Columbia's courts was in the spotlight amid allegations someone brought a gun into the courtroom for the verdict of the Ibrahim Ali case.
- The Trial Lawyers Association of B.C. released a statement and expressed that, "The safety of lawyers and of all legal professionals, both inside and outside of court, should be taken very seriously."

September 14, 2022 – 222 Main Street Courthouse

- A female federal Crown prosecutor was assaulted by an unknown woman while walking from the courthouse to off-site Public Prosecution Service of Canada (PPSC) offices alone.
- There was no evidence to suggest that the attack was connected to her occupation and her worksite (the courthouse). Motivations are unknown.
- A safety committee was created in September 2022. In addition to the actions noted below, other measures were taken, including additional training for staff and outreach to the community, including police.
- The following responses recommended by the local safety working group have been in place at 222 Main Street since 2022:

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May 25, 2021 – Vancouver Law Courts

- A woman used a filleting knife and hammer in an attempt to kill her "online nemesis" inside a Vancouver courtroom. She was sentenced to 12 years in prison on Nov. 30, 2023.
- A joint employer-union accident investigation occurred as a result of the incident and the subsequent recommendations were implemented, including:

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated Date: May 5, 2025

Recruitment and Retention for Court Administration and BC Sheriff Service

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Ministry is working to improve recruitment and retention for both Court Administration (CA) and the BC Sheriff Service (BCSS). This work is urgent for the BCSS which had 461 incidents related to staff shortages during the 2024 calendar year.
- As of May 1, 2025, 59 courtrooms have been closed or delayed this calendar year due to lack of a sheriff. This work is also urgent for CA to ensure that sufficient staff are available to support both in-court and registry operations.
- Government is currently in negotiations for the new collective agreement but has previously provided increased compensation to improve staff retention. The 18th (2019) and 19th (2022) collective agreements provided Sheriffs and Court Clerks with new temporary market adjustments to increase pay by up to an additional 15.9% of salary. Government also negotiated with the BCGEU to provide a temporary \$10,000 per year recruitment and retention incentive to sheriffs, which amounts to up to 14.8% of salary.
- The Ministry successfully marketed BCSS as a career path and 87 new recruits joined the staffing complement in 2024. This is an improvement from the 35-40 recruits per year who joined the staffing complement in 2020, 2021 and 2022. 96 more recruits are anticipated to start training in 2025.
- The Ministry continues to pursue other options to recruit and retain the employees who provide these valuable court administration and sheriff functions.

FINANCES:

- Budget 2025 provides \$1.754M to the Court Services Branch to fund the 2024 Cost of Living Adjustment under the collective agreement and to fund compensation adjustments for sheriff managers to reflect the retention incentive provided to included sheriffs.

STATISTICS:

- Efforts made by the Ministry to reduce employee attrition from its peak in 2022 and 2023 have made positive improvements. Further effort is required to reduce attrition rates back to the levels seen between 2016 and 2019.
 - CA employee attrition in 2024 was 16.3% compared against an average attrition rate of 13.3% from 2016-2019. 2024 attrition translates into 154 positions.

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- BCSS employee attrition in 2024 was 10.3% compared against an average attrition rate of 8.5% from 2016-2019. 2024 attrition translates into 58 positions.
- 54% of staff in CA and 43% of staff in BCSS have under 2 years of experience. Significant training in court/registry processes and safety/security fundamentals are required to understand and be proficient in courthouse operations.

BACKGROUND:

- Government has taken several measures to improve retention for both BCSS and CA. These include:
 - Temporary Market Adjustments (TMA) in the 18th (2019) and 19th (2022) BCGEU collective agreements. Most front-line sheriffs now get an additional 9.2% as a TMA on top of the salary lifts provided in each agreement. Court clerks now have a TMA that adds 5.75% to salary.
 - A temporary recruitment and retention incentive payment for included sheriffs of up to \$10,000 per year. This adds to up to 14.8% to the base pay of a sheriff. A corresponding Special Compensation Management Adjustment was applied to excluded sheriff managers.
 - A \$1,000 referral incentive for Court Clerks and Registry Clerks to encourage staff to recommend qualified people apply for positions in the branch. This incentive has been in place for BCSS positions for several years.
 - Increasing the ability to work remotely through virtual services and support.
 - Prioritizing and streamlining training.
- The Ministry continues to hire CA employees through government marketing efforts and the referral incentive noted above. In 2024, 178 employees were hired.
- The Ministry has successfully marketed BCSS as a career path and increased the number of sheriff recruits in training. 87 new recruits joined the staffing complement in 2024, and Court Services anticipates that an additional 96 recruits will start training in 2025. This is a significant increase from the 35-40 new recruits per year in 2020, 2021 and 2022.
- In order to meet operational requirements of the court, BCSS is:
 - Incurring significant overtime and travel costs, both to complete work outside of the normal working hours and to get sheriffs to understaffed locations. Overtime has caused significant pressure within the branch.
 - Managers, supervisors, training officers, and protective intelligence officers are being assigned to operational duties.
 - Denying leave requests which are outside of contractual entitlements to accommodate operational requirements.

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- In order to meet operational requirements of the court, CA is:
 - Pursuing expanded virtual service delivery to enhance flexibility to support from anywhere in the province. This includes virtual hearings and virtual registry services.
 - Expanding justice modernization initiatives to streamline processes to free up staff to work on priority services. These include:
 - The Access to Court Material (ACM) application uses digital credentials to provide lawyers with access to family and criminal documents; this has increased preparedness for court and the more efficient running of courtrooms such as family remand court.
 - Court case tracking systems continue to implement efficiencies that eliminate the need to mail notices to court participants and email them instead. This improves the speed with which disputes are resolved, reduces mailing costs, and frees up staff to work on priority projects.
 - Court transcripts are now submitted in electronic format instead of being physically couriered to court registries, thus improving overall efficiency and reducing delivery costs.
 - Working to increase electronic submission of materials in order to streamline the processing of materials.
- Overall, STIIP hours have risen from historical years, but the STIIP hours per FTE have remained relatively stable from last fiscal year.
- During 2024, 461 hearings were impacted by the lack of sheriff availability. In 136 of these cases, the judges decided to proceed without a sheriff. The remaining hearings were delayed or cancelled. As of the May 1st, 2025, 90 courtrooms have been impacted in 2025 by a lack of sheriff resources: 56 courtrooms were closed, 3 courtrooms were delayed, and 31 incidents the court proceeded in the absence of a sheriff.
- For BCSS, officers frequently depart for local police forces and the RCMP. These police forces pay officers an average of \$38k per year more. Since negotiating and initially offering the recruitment and retention incentive payment in 2023, which reduces the gap to \$28k per year, BCSS has seen a calendar year decrease in attrition from 11.9% in 2023 to 10.3% in 2024. 2025 is starting well, with the January 2025 attrition at the lowest rate in the past 6 years.
- During 2024, no hearings were impacted by the lack of court administration availability. Efforts were made to transfer support for virtual hearings to those offices with resource capacity on any given day. This flexibility has assisted in eliminating shortage issues to date.

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- For court administration, employees frequently depart for other organizations that offer higher salary or more flexible work arrangements (work from home, flex days, etc). As a front-line service delivery organization, CSB has limited options for this flexibility, however we continue to pursue technical solutions to advance in this area as noted above.

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated Date: May 5, 2025

Sheriff Resourcing

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Recruitment and retention challenges have impacted the BC Sheriff Service (BCSS).
- A comprehensive report produced by the Ministry in 2023 helped to better understand the concerns of sheriffs and make changes to position BCSS for success.
- Initiatives aim to improve pay and benefits, increase engagement, and leverage innovative hiring and marketing approaches to increase accessibility and support for applicants.
- The actions being taken are having a positive impact.
 - Following changes, postings have seen approximately 600 applications. In prior years, postings saw approximately 200 applications per posting.
 - In 2024, 87 new deputy sheriffs joined the BCSS, compared to both 2022 and 2023, in which only 33 new recruits joined the staffing complement each year.
 - The Ministry continues to work to increase its sheriff complement with 96 new recruits expected to start training in 2025.
 - Though resignation rates can be impacted by police recruitment cycles, there has been a decline in resignation rates from 41 in 2022, to 40 in 2023, to 30 in 2024.
- There are currently 550 fully trained sheriffs.

TOP ACTIONS TO DATE:

- Implemented a temporary retention incentive payment for included staff and a special management compensation adjustment for excluded staff.
- Changed the *Motor Vehicle Act* to improve safety by enabling sheriffs to utilize emergency equipment while engaged in statutory duties under the *Sheriff Act*.
- Submitted a proposal to the federal government to add BC sheriffs to the definition of 'public safety occupation' to improve pension provisions.
- Updated the marketing strategy for BCSS and continue to execute a public advertising campaign.
- Created a dedicated Recruitment Office and hired staff to operate it.
- Designed and implemented new and more accessible fitness testing.
- Removed financial barriers to achieve a low-cost, low-travel application process.
- Created a pooled competition model to fill sergeant and staff sergeant positions.

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- Went from a provincial recruit hiring model to a regional one, offering greater transparency.
- Increased and diversified training opportunities for sheriffs across the province.
- Planned implementation of a sheriff-specific leadership program.
- Revamping and modernizing the Sheriff Recruit Training Program.
- Purchase of additional pistols and have plans to replace existing pistols.
- Analysis and preliminary consultations regarding potential for expanded duties.

BACKGROUND:

- There were 250, 461 and 90 instances of sheriff shortages in 2023, 2024 and 2025 (YTD as of May 1, 2025) respectively, when a court proceeded without a sheriff present, or was delayed or cancelled due to no sheriff being available. The table included below shows the closures or delays from 2016 to present.
- In 2019, the Office of the Auditor General produced a review: *Managing Human Resources at the B.C. Sheriff Service* of which the recommendations have been implemented.
- The ministry subsequently conducted an internal report in 2023, resulting in 46 recommendations. The top 5 recommendations involve:
 - Pay and benefits, expanded duties, organizational structure, tools and equipment, and leadership programs.
- The BC Public Service Agency (PSA) and the BC General Employees' Union implemented a temporary recruitment and retention incentive payment of up to \$10,000 for eligible sheriffs, adult corrections officers, and youth custody officers in July 2023. This has reduced the gap in pay between sheriffs and police from \$38k on average to \$28k on average.
- The Ministry retained Dentons Canada LLP to draft a submission to the federal government to have sheriffs designated as a public safety occupation in the *Income Tax Regulations* to receive better pension provisions in December 2023. No decision has been communicated by the federal government.
- Expanded duties which are under consideration for sheriffs would require legislative change. The Ministry is currently engaged in consultation with key justice service partners to determine the feasibility of this proposal.
- Increased recruitment (263% more new sheriffs in 2024 compared to 2023) and reduced resignations (25% reduction in 2024 from 2023) are promising; however, retention remains a key concern given ongoing market competition and recruitment of sheriffs by police.

Security Concern

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 3, 2025

BC First Nations Justice Strategy

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Ministry is working with the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) to implement the BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy) to reform the justice system to be safer and more responsive for Indigenous people and to restore First Nations justice institutions.
- The Strategy is leading transformative changes to the justice system to improve outcomes for Indigenous Peoples interacting with the justice system and to reduce the overincarceration of Indigenous Peoples.
- Rebuilding First Nations justice systems as an expression of self determination is at the core of the Strategy. The Indigenous Justice Secretariat (IJS) has a vital role in supporting First Nations in that rebuilding work.
- The Indigenous Justice Secretariat is responsible for cross-ministry implementation of the Strategy and operationalization of the identified priorities within Government. This work includes:
 - Implementation of the Declaration Act where it intersects with justice,
 - Supporting relationships with the Province and Canada to advance jointly identified priorities, funding, and partnership opportunities where the Strategy aligns with provincial and federal mandates, and
 - Influencing social sector areas that provide health and housing supports for individuals in the justice system.
- The Ministry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General, has partnered with BCFNJC to develop joint implementation plans to ensure continued progress in implementing the Strategy.
- The Province funds the delivery of legal and wrap-around services for Indigenous people through 15 Indigenous Justice Centres, operated by BCFNJC under Strategy 4 of the Strategy. The Province also funds the delivery of Gladue Services, as per Strategy 6 of the Strategy.

FINANCES:

- Budget 2025/26 provides \$17.045M to BCFNJC from previous years budget decisions to advance the BC First Nations Justice Strategy, including Indigenous Justice Centres and Gladue Services. This includes:
 - Up to \$15.149M in funding the operations of the 15 physical IJs;

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- Up to \$0.650M towards the operation of the Virtual IJC; and
- Up to \$1.246M Gladue services and reports. (Canada provides \$0.547M to BCFNJC for Gladue Services annually.)
- Budget 2025/26 provides \$1.45M funding for operations and staffing the IJS.

BACKGROUND:

- The Strategy was endorsed on February 26, 2020, and an Implementation Workplan (“Workplan”) was approved at Cabinet.
- Advancing the Strategy is an Action in the Declaration Act Action Plan (Item 3.12) and is included in the Attorney General’s Mandate Letter.
- BCFNJC, Justice Canada, and the Province signed a Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2021 that committed to advancing the work under the Strategy and to collaborate on the Federal Indigenous Justice Strategy. Public Safety Canada signed onto the MOU in May of 2023.
- The Government of Canada has committed \$8.9M over five years (2021/22 to 2025/26) to BCFNJC as it continues to support and expand the number of IJCs and operate the Virtual IJC in B.C.
- The Ministry, along with the Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General have a shared decision-making protocol with BCFNJC for the purpose of advancing the Strategy, which includes a bilateral leadership table and a joint implementation planning function to ensure a coordinated approach in achieving the aims of the Strategy and identified AG/PSSG mandate priorities.
- The Province is committed to working in partnership with BCFNJC, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the criminal justice system, which has its roots in long-standing systemic racism and the impacts of intergenerational trauma from residential schools.

Contact: Colleen Spier KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 4, 2025

BC First Nations Justice Council Collaboration and Provincial Funding

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Ministry is working with the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) on the implementation of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy).
- The work of implementing the Strategy is coordinated under the Indigenous Justice Secretariat (IJS) in the Ministry of Attorney General.
- The Strategy has implications across the justice and social sectors, and as such, BCFNJC engages with numerous other ministries to seek funding and support to implement the Strategy.
- IJS coordinates across ministries to advance the Strategy in partnership with BCFNJC and other impacted ministries.

FINANCES:

- Budget 2025/26 provides \$17.045M to BCFNJC from previous years budget decisions to advance the BC First Nations Justice Strategy, including Indigenous Justice Centres and Gladue Services. This includes:
 - Up to \$15.149M in funding the operations of the 15 physical IJCs;
 - Up to \$0.650M towards the operation of the Virtual IJC; and
 - Up to \$1.246M Gladue services and reports.
- Budget 2025/26 provides \$1.450M funding for operations and staffing the IJS.

BACKGROUND:

- BCFNJC has engaged the following ministries for the purpose of funding initiatives aligned with the BC First Nations Justice Strategy:
 - In 2025/2026, through the Safe Supports Initiative, the Ministry of Attorney General has funded BCFNJC to support the Auntie Support Worker for a Family Court Support Worker in the Prince George Indigenous Justice Centre.
 - In 2024/2025 the Ministry of Children and Family Development funded BCFNJC for engagement on the Indigenous Youth Justice and Prevention Plan (Strategy 10).
 - The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General provided grants in 2023/24 and 2024/25 to BCFNJC for engagement on the Policing and Public Safety Modernization Working Group.

Confidential

- BCFNJC was provided funds in 2024/25 through the Canada-British Columbia bilateral agreement as part of the National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan. This funding was to support cultural competency training (Strategy 20B) as well as the Provincial Director, Indigenous Women and Children (Strategies 10 & 11).
- The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and Ministry of Attorney General are collaborating to provide services from Indigenous Justice Centres and Gladue Services for Indigenous clients in the Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative program.
- Public Safety Canada has funded BCFNJC \$7.5M over five years (2024/25-2028/29) to advance a Diversion Pilot Project in Prince George. This pilot is likely to include collaboration with the Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and other public bodies in order to be fully implemented.
- The Department of Justice, through the Justice Partnership & Innovation Program has funded BCFNJC \$8.9M over five years (2021/22-2025/26) to support and expand the number of IJC's and operate the Virtual IJC in B.C.

Contact: Colleen Spier KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 03, 2025

Declaration Act Action Plan

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- On March 30, 2022, the Declaration Act Action Plan (Action Plan) was launched during a special event and tabled in the Legislature.
- The Action Plan outlines significant actions the Province will undertake in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples over the next five years to advance reconciliation.
- The Ministry is leading five actions within the Action Plan:
 - Action 2.3: Issue guidelines from the Attorney General of B.C. to Ministry of Attorney General legal counsel regarding the conduct of civil litigation involving the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
 - Action 3.6: Introduce anti-racism legislation that addresses Indigenous-specific racism.
 - Action 3.10: Implement improvements to public safety oversight bodies and complaints processes, such as enhanced investments in the BC Human Rights Tribunal and new models for including Indigenous laws in complaints resolution (with PSSG).
 - Action 3.12: Prioritize implementation of the First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy) to reduce the substantial overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples involved in and impacted by the justice system. This includes affirming First Nations self-determination and enabling the restoration of traditional justice systems and culturally relevant institutions (with PSSG).
 - Action 3.13: Prioritize endorsement and implementation of the Métis Justice Strategy to reduce the substantial overrepresentation of Métis Peoples in and impacted by the justice system. This includes affirming Métis self-determination and enabling the restoration of traditional justice systems and culturally relevant institutions (with PSSG).
- The litigation guidelines referred to in Action 2.3 were released as the Directives on Civil Litigation involving Indigenous Peoples on April 21, 2022.
- The remaining action items continue to progress, including implementation of the Strategy, planning for the implementation of the Métis Justice Strategy, development of a provincial anti-racism action plan following the Anti-Racism legislation enacted on May 16, 2024 and improvements to public safety oversight bodies and complaints processes.

STATISTICS:

- The Action Plan was co-developed with Indigenous Peoples, including approximately 150 meetings with Indigenous leadership, over 100 written submissions, contributions to an online engagement website, and direct input on the consultation draft.

BACKGROUND:

- The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act)* passed into law on November 26, 2019, and brought the articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into B.C. law.
- Section 4 of the Declaration Act requires Government to prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of UNDRIP.
- The Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) led the development of the Action Plan on behalf of Government and continues to maintain overall responsibility for the advancement and reporting of the Action Plan.
- At the time of the release of the Action Plan, the Ministry was also responsible for a sixth action, Action 4.25, related to increasing both on- and off-reserve housing. As the responsibility for housing has now transferred to the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry is no longer directly involved in the advancement of this action.
- The Ministry is also participating in three actions within the Action Plan:
 - Ending violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people;
 - Police reform; and
 - Addressing the disproportionate impacts of the overdose public health emergency on Indigenous Peoples.
- Section 5 of the Declaration Act requires the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation to prepare a report each year for the 12-month period ending on March 31 that summarizes the government's efforts to implement the articles of UNDRIP. The annual report is required to be presented by June 30 each year.

Contact: Colleen Spier, KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 03, 2025

Enforcement of Laws

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- First Nations across B.C. are exercising their law-making authority under a variety of mechanisms, such as:
 - Bylaw making authority under the *Indian Act*;
 - Land Code laws under the *Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management*;
 - Administration of Justice chapters in Modern Treaty or Self-Government Agreements; and
 - Child welfare laws under Bill C-92 and the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

- Enforcement of Laws (EOL) refers to all aspects of enforcing a legal order, including but not limited to matters of policing, prosecution, court services, as well as punitive and restorative justice.

FINANCES:

- Budget 2025/26 provides \$20.333M to the Indigenous Justice Secretariat (IJS), \$1.45M in funding for operations and staffing the Indigenous Justice Secretariat (IJS).
- Two FTEs from the Indigenous Justice Secretariat support this work.

STATISTICS:

- IJS has organized an inventory of over 225 First Nation requests on a wide range of justice-related issues received over the past several years.

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- Approximately one-third of the requests in the inventory relate to Enforcement of Laws in First Nation communities.

BACKGROUND:

- The IJS was jointly directed by the Attorney General and Solicitor General to facilitate the establishment of an Assistant Deputy Minister First Nations Community Safety Committee and to administer a targeted pilot program Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

- This immediate targeted action with a limited group of First Nations is in response to invitations made by these Nations. These engagements are only the beginning of this work. All efforts will be made to arrange future community safety project planning sessions with First Nations in a state of readiness to do so.
- IJS will develop project plans with pilot communities to gain a better understanding of how the Province might broadly support EOL for First Nations.
- To provide the Province with clear illustrations of how it can use existing capacity to immediately respond to First Nations' community safety issues, including EOL, and how to align government programming and policy decisions to best support First Nations' community safety as broadly as possible, the ADM committee will:
 - review information gathered via the pilot program;
 - canvas support from impacted ministries; and
 - directly report to the Cabinet Committee on Community Safety.

Contact: Colleen Spier, KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: May 05, 2025

Gladue Services

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Indigenous Peoples are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. The Supreme Court of Canada mandates that Gladue factors must be considered in all criminal proceedings involving Indigenous individuals, and these principles should be integrated broadly within the justice system.
- Gladue reports offer courts detailed insights into an Indigenous offender's background and community, presenting alternatives to incarceration for sentencing and bail.
- As of April 1, 2021, Gladue services in B.C. were transitioned from Legal Aid BC to the Gladue Services Department (GSD) of the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) under the BC First Nations Justice Strategy.
- The GSD focuses on increasing the capacity of Gladue writers, enhancing public awareness, and formalizing the reporting process within the justice system. GSD operates mainly at the community level, collaborating with newly established Indigenous Justice Centres across B.C.
- The GSD is a branch of the BCFNJC, with its budget determined in alignment with agreements between BCFNJC and the Province or other funding sources.

FINANCES:

- Budget 2025/26 provides up to \$1.246M to BCFNJC for Gladue Services and reports from previous years budget decisions.
- Canada provides \$0.547M to BCFNJC for Gladue Services annually.
- The program was funded by the Law Foundation instead of government until 2018.

STATISTICS:

Fiscal Year	Requests Received	Reports Completed	Unassigned Reports
2017/18 (LABC)	136	131	
2018/19 (LABC)	240	216	
2019/20 (LABC)	298	289	
2020/21 (LABC)	259	215	
2021/22 (BCFNJC)	378	242 (66 by Legal Aid)	
2022/23 (BCFNJC)	511	440	
2023/24 (BCFNJC)	575	402	64 (at the end of the FY)
2024/25 (BCFNJC)	403	250	153 (at the end of the FY)

BACKGROUND:

- Gladue reports are used for bail, sentencing, appeals, long-term offender hearings, dangerous offender hearings and parole hearings, to improve access to justice, promote Indigenous self-determination, and address systemic racism.
- BCFNJC has had a triage policy since fall 2022 as the demand for Gladue products has increasingly outweighed supply. In April 2024 BCFNJC updated the Triage Policy as demand was superseding supply and Gladue letters were introduced to address backlog. This policy has not been received well by defence, crown and judiciary, and BCFNJC is seeing a decrease in the requests. As of April 2025, there is no longer a triage policy.
- The average wait time for a writer to be assigned is 6 weeks.
- Of the 153 requests received in FY 2024/2025 and still outstanding (the backlog), 135 are in progress, and 18 are unassigned.
- Gladue Letters will be provided for all Gladue requests, until June 30, 2025. Gladue Letters contain the same content as a Gladue Report in a more concise format. Gladue reports take 6-8 weeks to complete and Gladue letter take 4-6 weeks to complete, once assigned. BCFNJC is focused on quality Gladue products (Letters and Reports) that maintain the standard of Gladue to ensure that they are sufficiently reliable for the court use.
- The Gladue Services Department has developed comprehensive in-house training for Gladue Writers.

Contact: Colleen Spier KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat	Mobile: Personal Security
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 3, 2025

Indigenous Courts

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Indigenous Sentencing Courts (ICs) in B.C. were created to offer a culturally appropriate justice system for Indigenous peoples, incorporating Indigenous values, traditions, and perspectives into legal processes.
- There are currently nine existing ICs located in communities across B.C.: Duncan, Kamloops, Merritt, North Vancouver, Prince George, Nicola Valley, New Westminster, Hazelton, and Lillooet.
- The New Westminster, North Vancouver, and Duncan ICs are experiencing significant case load pressures and require additional sitting dates to be added to their dockets to adequately serve their communities.
- The increased demand is due, in part, to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada diverting less serious cases to alternative measures, which has resulted in more serious cases being referred to Indigenous courts.
 - This has resulted in increased pressures on the limited resources of these courts as some of these sentences extend beyond the typical range of 12 to 24 months for less serious offences.
- Demand has also gone up due to the increased awareness of these courts among members of the judiciary, Crown Counsel, defence counsel representing Indigenous clients, and Indigenous offenders, all of whom are seeking alternatives to incarceration to help reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in provincial and federal correctional facilities.

FINANCES:

- There is no specific budget for Indigenous courts provided for in the estimates as they are supported through in-kind contributions from government agencies such as Court Services Branch, BC Prosecution Service, Victims Services, Sheriffs, BC Corrections, and others, as well as community service providers.
- The Law Foundation of BC and Legal Aid BC provide funding to support Elders and duty counsel, respectively.

BACKGROUND:

- Indigenous Sentencing Courts do not conduct trials; rather, their focus is on developing a healing plan for the offender and providing them with the wrap around supports they need to successfully undertake and complete their healing journey.

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- These processes often involve restorative approaches as well as local Indigenous culture to help offenders restore their wellbeing and to repair the harm they have caused to loved ones, the victim/survivor, their families, and their community.
- While Indigenous courts have some elements in common, they are rooted and guided by local Indigenous cultural practices and the needs of each community in which they are located.
- Offenders generally sit in a circle with a provincial court judge, their lawyer, Crown Counsel, and Elders.
 - Others in the circle may include family members, other support people, and the victim/survivor.
- At the end of an offender's sentence being completed successfully, there is usually a traditional ceremony that honors the completion of the offender's healing plan to celebrate their accomplishment.
 - At this time, the judge may use their discretion to stay the proceedings.
- There are currently nine Indigenous Sentencing Courts in BC:
 - New Westminster First Nations Court (opened November 2006)
 - North Vancouver Chet wa nexwníw ta S7ekw'í7tel Indigenous Court (opened February 2012, serves Whistler, Squamish and the North Shore)
 - Kamloops Cknucwentn First Nations Sentencing Court (opened March 2013)
 - Duncan First Nations Court (opened May 2013)
 - Nicola Valley Indigenous Court (opened in Merritt, October 2017)
 - Prince George Indigenous Court (opened April 2018)
 - Williams Lake Indigenous Court (opened December 2020)
 - Hazelton Indigenous Court (opened August 2021)
 - Lillooet Indigenous Court (opened September 2023)
- Indigenous Justice Secretariat is aware of seven Nations who are at various stages of developing proposals for an Indigenous court in their communities.

Contact: Colleen Spier, KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Indigenous Justice Centres

Last updated: April 9, 2025

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Province endorsed the First Nations Justice Strategy in February 2020, which is Indigenous-led by the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC).
- Strategy 4 of the First Nations Justice Strategy committed to establishing 15 Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC) across British Columbia.
- In 2022, the Province announced through the Safer Communities Action Plan the commitment to expand the network of IJC in B.C. to 15.
- IJC provide legal advice, information, and representation in both criminal and child protection matters for Indigenous people. The centres take a holistic approach to client and community wellness by facilitating connections to various supports, including guidance from Elders and Knowledge Keepers, housing assistance, mental health and addictions treatment, and employment services.
- Currently, fourteen physical IJC are operating in British Columbia: Burns Lake, Chilliwack, Cranbrook, Hazelton, Kamloops, Kelowna, Merritt, Nanaimo, Port Hardy, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Surrey, Vancouver, Williams Lake, Victoria, with a 15th centre to open in Fort St. John in March 2025.
- Additionally, there is a Virtual IJC that offers no-cost legal services to Indigenous clients living in underserved areas where legal advice or representation is hard to access or completely unavailable.

FINANCES:

- Budget 2025/26 provides approximately \$15.799M to BCFNJC for the Indigenous Justice Centres from prior years budget decisions.
 - \$15.149M in funding for the operations of the fifteen physical IJC
 - \$0.650M towards the operation of the Virtual IJC

STATISTICS:

- The number of clients served in the network of IJC over the past two fiscal years.

	Legal Matters	Legal Clients
2023-24	315	281
2024-25	919	692

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BACKGROUND:

- The IJCs have been identified by the BCFNJC as a high priority action area within, and cornerstone of, the BC First Nations Justice Strategy.
- The IJCs provide the necessary infrastructure and community capacity to allow communities to identify and implement programs based on wrap-around, culturally relevant services for the people within their communities.
- The IJCs provide culturally appropriate information, advice, support, and representation to clients, with a primary focus on criminal law and child protection.
- The IJCs also have outreach and support staff to assist clients to address wellness needs holistically and begin the process of tackling the factors that brought them into the justice system.
- The IJCs are community-specific, so if these supports are already provided in the community, clients will be connected through guided referrals.

Contact: Colleen Spier, KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat	Mobile: ^{Personal Security}
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 3, 2025

Indigenous Justice Secretariat

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Ministry has implemented an Indigenous Justice Secretariat (IJS) to fulfill the commitment made by the Province in Strategy 9 of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy).
- IJS supports the BC First Nation Justice Council (BCFNJC) in the implementation of the Strategy, including support for operational initiatives such as Indigenous Justice Centres and Gladue Services delivered through BCFNJC.
- The IJS leads the transformative work and implementation of the Strategy within Government, including influencing social sector areas that provide health and housing supports for individuals in the justice system.
- At the core of the Strategy is the rebuilding of First Nations justice systems as an expression of self determination. The IJS has a vital role in supporting First Nations in that rebuilding.
- Implementation work includes the IJS advancing within government changes to laws, policies, and practices that are directly responsive to what First Nations leadership determines is needed for Strategy implementation and rebuilding of their justice systems, including addressing issues related to enforcement of laws.
- The IJS is responsible for cross-ministry implementation of the Strategy and operationalization of the identified priorities within Government. This includes the implementation of the *Declaration Act* where it intersects with justice, as well as supporting relationships between First Nations, the Province, and Canada to advance jointly identified priorities, funding, and partnership opportunities where the Strategy aligns with provincial and federal mandates.
- The IJS is also responsible for working with Métis Nation BC on the cross-ministry implementation of the Métis Justice Strategy, managing the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association contract and working with Canada to support the development of the Federal Indigenous Justice Strategy.

FINANCES:

- Budget 2025/26 provides \$20.333M for the IJS, with \$1.45M for operations and staffing the IJS.

BACKGROUND:

- The Strategy was endorsed on February 26, 2020, and an Implementation Workplan was approved at Cabinet in July 2021.
Advice/Recommendations
- The Strategy aims not only to make short-term transformation, but also transformation that is multi-generational across two tracks of change. Track 1 focuses on reforming the existing justice system, while providing a foundation for Track 2 work, which is restoring First Nations' legal traditions.
- Since the endorsement of the Strategy, the BCFNJC prioritized the creation of the IJS to fulfill the commitment of Strategy 9: Establish a Cross-Ministry Indigenous Justice Secretariat under the leadership of the Ministry of the Attorney General to lead the transformative work within government as identified within this Strategy.
- The Province is committed to working in partnership with the BCFNJC, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the criminal justice system, which has its roots in long-standing systemic racism and the impacts of intergenerational trauma from residential schools.
- Advancing the Strategy and the Métis Justice Strategy are Actions in the Declaration Act Action Plan.

Contact: Colleen Spier, KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 3, 2025

Métis Justice Strategy

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Advancing a Métis Justice Strategy (MJS) is an action in the Declaration Act Action Plan.
- The Declaration Act Action Plan was released on March 30, 2022, and outlines significant actions the Province will undertake in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples over the next five years to advance reconciliation.
- Consultation on the Workplan and final draft MJS occurred in early fall 2022, with additional consultation between Ministry of Children and Family Development and Métis Nation BC (MNBC) in early 2023 after MNBC added an additional recommendation on Youth Justice (recommendation 12).

- The MJS was endorsed by Cabinet in June 2024

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

FINANCES:

Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

BACKGROUND:

- In April 2019, in response to the change in mandate of the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC), MNBC formed its own justice council, the Métis Nation British Columbia Justice Council (MNBCJC).
- MNBCJC was given a mandate to address the ways the justice system interacts with Métis Peoples within B.C. and to inform a Métis-specific justice strategy developed in partnership with the Ministry of Attorney General and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.
- The development of the draft Métis Justice Report in 2019/2020, which provided the foundation for the MJS, occurred after seven regional consultation sessions were held to ensure participation of community members from the then 38 Métis Chartered Communities (there are now 39 Métis Chartered Communities in B.C.).
- In January 2021, the MNBCJC provided an embargoed draft of the Strategy to the Indigenous Justice, Policy, and Legislation Division (known today as the Indigenous Justice Secretariat [IJS]).

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- IJS consulted with 11 ministries on the draft MJS and received oral and written feedback. The draft MJS received a positive response from partner ministries and only minor suggested changes were delivered to the MNBCJC on July 30, 2021. All but one of the suggested changes were incorporated into the final embargoed MJS.
- A one time grant of \$0.500M was provided from IJS to MNBC in fiscal year 2023/24 to support MNBC to engage with the Province on updating their Implementation Workplan.

Cabinet Confidences

- IJS continues to work with BCFNJC and MNBC to establish an ongoing venue for engagement on the pan-Indigenous services that BCFNJC provides under the First Nations Justice Strategy—Indigenous Justice Centres and Gladue.

Contact: Colleen Spier, KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat	Mobile:
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 3, 2025

Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Indigenous Peoples in B.C. continue to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system, due to long-standing systemic racism and the impacts of intergenerational trauma from residential schools.
- The Indigenous Courtworker program ensures Indigenous Peoples in conflict with the law receive fair, equitable, and culturally sensitive treatment while in the court system.
- Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC (NCCABC) operates in 51 of B.C.'s courthouses, as well as providing supports to clients in virtual bail hearings, two First Nations Courts (New Westminster and Duncan) and the Downtown Community Court in Vancouver.
- For over 50 years, NCCABC has provided culturally appropriate services to Indigenous Peoples in conflict with the law and ensures they participate fully in the justice system through a holistic approach of prevention and intervention.
- Support services are accomplished by assisting persons involved in the criminal justice system; providing access to counselling and referral services for clients with substance abuse and detox support issues; and providing advocate services for Indigenous families and youth.
- The work of the NCCABC aligns with the Province's commitment of working with Indigenous leadership to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the criminal justice system.

FINANCES:

- This program is managed by the Indigenous Justice Secretariat of the Ministry of Attorney General.
- The Province provides \$1.76M annually to NCCABC to deliver the program. The federal government matches this contribution.
- The federal/provincial funding agreement covers five years—fiscal year 2023/2024 to 2027/2028.

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STATISTICS:

- In Fiscal Year 2023/2024, NCCABC provided the following support:
 - Clients provided out of court services: 9,876.
 - Clients provided in court services: 8,908.
 - Total Clients served: 18,784.

BACKGROUND:

- BC Corrections was responsible for the NCCABC program and contract until fiscal year 2023/2024 when the program was transferred to the Indigenous Justice Secretariat.
- NCCABC was founded in 1973 and has been part of the implementation of reconciliation for Indigenous Peoples within the justice system for over 50 years.

Contact: Colleen Spier, KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat	Mobile: ^{Personal Security}
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 3, 2025

Transition of Indigenous Legal Aid Services

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Province is supporting the BC First Nation Justice Council (BCFNJC) in developing a plan to transition legal aid services from Legal Aid BC (LABC) to BCFNJC.
- This transition aligns with the BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy) and aims to enhance access to justice while improving legal counsel and legal aid services for Indigenous individuals navigating the criminal justice system.
- BCFNJC currently operates 15 Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC) to provide legal services and wraparound supports to Indigenous peoples in those communities, supported by a Virtual IJC for those unable to attend a physical IJC.
- Gladue report writing services were transitioned to the BCFNJC's Gladue Services Department from LABC on April 1, 2021.

BACKGROUND:

- Strategy 5 of the First Nations Justice Strategy commits to the Establishment of First Nations Legal Services. This includes the development of a workplan to transition legal aid services for Indigenous people from LABC to BCFNJC, an Indigenous-led organization.
- BCFNJC is working in partnership with LABC and the Province to implement the transfer of legal aid services for Indigenous people and is in the process of developing an innovative and holistic model of legal aid services that reflects the need for better, more effective, and more culturally informed legal counsel and legal aid services. ^{Advice/Recommendations}
- In Fall 2023, engagement was conducted to gather feedback from Indigenous Peoples, justice service providers, and legal professionals on the current and future state of legal aid services. The Legal Aid Services team held 18 in-person community sessions, 17 in-person legal professional sessions, 3 virtual community sessions and one virtual lawyer session, which led to the release of a *What We Heard Report* by BCFNJC.

Contact: Colleen Spier, KC, ADM, Indigenous Justice Secretariat

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 03, 2025.

British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The BC Human Rights Tribunal (BCHRT) continues to face challenges with delivering timely access to justice, with citizens facing delays in resolution of their human rights complaints.
- Since the current BCHRT Chair's initial appointment in August 2021, the Tribunal has:
 - Established a pandemic-specific case program,
 - Completed preliminary rounds of stakeholder consultation, and
 - Developed and launched multiple pilot projects to reform complaint processes, increase accessibility and re-allocate resources to create efficiencies.
- The Tribunal has also increased efforts toward facilitating settlements by contracting external mediators to help parties reach agreement without proceeding to hearing.
- The Province increased funding for the BCHRT in early 2023. The additional funding has supported the BCHRT in addressing the increased caseload through allowing the tribunal to appoint more members and hire additional support staff to better meet clients' needs.
- Ministry staff continue to work collaboratively with the BCHRT to address caseload challenges through managing human resources, process improvements, securing financial resources, and technological advancements.

FINANCES:

- The AG Tribunal Services estimates budget for fiscal 2025/26 is \$42.113 million.
- Treasury Board approved a \$2.9M increase to the base budget for the BCHRT in early 2023, and a further \$1.5 million was approved in 2024 to relieve existing budget pressures and ensure fair and equitable access to B.C.'s human rights system for all citizens of B.C.
- The BCHRT is currently supported by 49 FTEs (which includes tribunal members and staff).

STATISTICS:

- BCHRT continues to receive a significant number of human rights complaints, with approximately 6,000 active cases and 2,500 new cases being filed annually.
- Backlogs resulted from a sudden increase in case volumes in 2022/23 that BCHRT resources could not absorb, leading to delays in case resolution estimated at 6+ years.

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- In 2023/24 BCHRT conducted 607 mediations (150 more than previous year) and resolved 411 complaints in mediation; the Tribunal's settlement rate increased to 68% from 58% from the previous reporting period.
- In 2023/24, 2,023 cases were closed. This was 700 more complaints than the prior year. The Tribunal held 47 hearings with an average hearing time of 5 days.

BACKGROUND:

- The BCHRT is an independent, quasi-judicial body created under the *BC Human Rights Code* that is responsible for accepting, screening, mediating, and adjudicating human rights complaints.
- Ministry staff have been supporting the BCHRT to effectively manage its caseload which is the result of systemic and unprecedented challenges within the past six years.
- These matters include the additions of Indigenous identity and gender identity and expression to the *BC Human Rights Code*, passing the *Accessibility Act*, passing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, establishment of the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (which reinvigorated a focus on human rights issues), the "MeToo" movement, the "Black Lives Matter" movement and many pandemic-related complaints.
- The ministry has been actively working with BCHRT on a number of efforts aimed at addressing its caseload, which consists of:
 - Relieving current resource and budgetary pressures, in addition to forecasting future budget needs based on expected case volumes;
 - Continued improvements to their case management system to process complaints efficiently;
 - Updating BCHRT's website to create a streamlined online public portal for submitting complaints; and
 - Identifying further opportunities for improving business and operational processes.
- The ministry maintains ongoing dialogue with the tribunal and is confident the measures outlined above will address the complaint volumes and backlogged files.

Contact: Alanna Valentine-Pickett, A/ED, Tribunals and Agencies
Support Division

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Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 19, 2025.

Early Resolution Program Expansion

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- As a key part of reforms to the Provincial Court Family Rules, the Ministry and Provincial Court introduced the Early Resolution Model (the Model) as a prototype in Victoria in 2019, expanding to Surrey (Dec 2020), and Port Coquitlam (Nov 2024).
- The Model will be implemented in Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and New Westminster starting April 1st, 2025; and in Vancouver (Robson Square), North Vancouver, Richmond, Sechelt, and Pemberton on November 1, 2025. Further expansion requires additional financial investment to support service delivery.
- The Model builds on existing family justice services to provide individuals with family law matters early access to information and referrals, screening for family violence, assistance resolving disputes out-of-court, and help preparing for court.
- Evaluation results in Victoria are very positive, indicating the Model benefits families by resolving family law matters in less adversarial ways, resulting in earlier resolutions and reducing pressures on the court. Similar trends have been shown in Surrey.

FINANCES:

- Government Financial Information
includes support for Justice Services Branch and Legal Aid BC. This
Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information

STATISTICS:

- Results from the final evaluations of implementation of the Model in Victoria (November 2021) and Surrey (January 2025) found:
 - User feedback from families indicated benefits from the early resolution process, high rates of satisfaction, and overall support for the Model.
 - Supported resolution out of court (only 31% of families in Victoria and 43% of families in Surrey who initiated the early resolution process proceeded to court).
 - Reduced volume of new family law cases (-21% in Victoria and -61% in Surrey)
 - Reduced the overall need for court time (63% reduction in total family court time in Victoria Provincial Court, 45% reduction in Surrey).

BACKGROUND:

- The Model applies to all parties seeking to resolve a family law matter (defined by the Provincial Court Family Rules): parenting arrangements; child and spousal support;

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contact with a child; guardianship; and companion animals. Parties seeking other orders (e.g. related to protection or priority parenting matters) proceed directly to court as the Model requirements do not apply.

- The Model requires parties with a family law matter to complete the following before filing an application in Provincial Court:
 - A needs assessment, which includes early screening for family violence, identification of legal and non-legal needs, access to legal information, referrals to community organizations and legal advice; and support preparing for the appropriate next step;
 - A parenting education course; and
 - One Consensual Dispute Resolution (CDR) session, if appropriate.
- Parties can apply to the court for an exemption to any/all requirements. CDR under the Model is not mandatory, the requirement applies only if, following the needs assessment, a determination has been made that CDR is appropriate.
- The Model is designed to reduce conflict and build skills to prevent future conflict through earlier and more durable resolutions. It also helps families, many of whom are without legal representation, prepare for the next steps in resolving family law matters.
- Parties who reach agreement on some or all issues through CDR are referred for legal advice prior to signing any agreement. If CDR does not result in agreement on all issues, it often increases parties' understanding of their issues and prepares them for court.
- The Ministry puts great emphasis on ensuring staff providing family justice services have specialized knowledge about the dynamics of family violence (including coercive control) and its effect on families and children.
- CDR may not be appropriate due to issues such as family violence, power imbalances, or capacity to participate. The process may be adapted to support safety and participation.

Contact: Stephanie Melvin, ED, Family Justice Services Division	Mobile: ^{Personal Security}
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: February 26, 2025.

Family Violence

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- One of the Attorney General's mandate items is to "continue work to ensure that the justice system is responsive to the needs of survivors of gender-based violence" with support from the Parliamentary Secretary on Gender Equity.
- Justice Services Branch includes several divisions that are actively working to address family violence and gender-based violence in the criminal, family, civil, and human rights justice sectors.
- Ministry actions under way include:
 - Appointing Dr. Kim Stanton to conduct a systemic review of the province's treatment of victims and survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence (IPV) in the criminal, civil, and family legal systems,
 - Implementing the Safe Supports project to support families impacted by IPV as they navigate the family law system, which includes family court support worker services in five locations, and an information gatherer role to support survivors in accessing court information and records,
 - A review of the Family Law Act to assess the ways the act addresses family violence,
 - Legal Aid funding to create a multidisciplinary trauma-informed family law clinic, and
 - The Family Justice Services Division has staff in 25 locations across the province trained with specialized knowledge about the dynamics of family violence and provides in person and virtual services to families going through separation and divorce.

FINANCES:

- The temporary federal Justice Partnership and Innovation Program funding is \$1 million unmatched in 2025/26 to support operation of the Safe Supports project.
- For details on Early Resolution see *note 39-Early Resolution Program Expansion*.
- For details on Legal Aid and family violence see *note 44-Legal Aid British Columbia Funding*.

STATISTICS:

- In British Columbia, the rate of police-reported Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in 2022 was 292 people per 100,000 population (based on data from the Incident-Based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey).
- 20 BC women were killed in acts of gender-based violence (GBV) in 2023, according to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability.
- From 2012-2022, there were 135 intimate partner violence-related homicide deaths in BC. In 2022, suspected intimate partner-related homicide deaths accounted for 9% of total reported homicide deaths.
- The World Health Organization recognizes that GBV, particularly IPV and sexual violence, is a major public and clinical health problem and a violation of human rights, which is rooted in and perpetuates gender inequities.
- Indigenous women and girls are at a disproportionate risk of and face among the highest rates of violent and non-violent victimization – including family violence – of all population groups in Canada.
- 2SLGBTQIA+, young people, persons living with disability or neurodiversity, Indigenous and other racialized/marginalized individuals and populations are often disproportionately impacted by GBV, as well as legislative gaps or biases in its interpretation.

BACKGROUND:

- In June 2024, the Attorney General appointed Dr. Kim Stanton to conduct a systemic review of the province's treatment of victims and survivors of sexual assault and IPV in the criminal, civil and family legal systems. A final report is expected in June 2025.
- With funding from the federal Justice Partnership and Innovation Program, the ministry is leading the Safe Supports project. This project is implementing, monitoring and evaluating prototype programs to improve the experience of families who have been impacted by IPV as they navigate the family law system. The project includes family court support worker services in five primarily rural, remote and Northern locations to provide wrap around services. The Safe Supports project also includes an information gatherer role to support survivors of IPV in accessing court information and records.
- The ministry is conducting a review of the Family Law Act, including the various ways in which the act addresses family violence.
- Family Justices Services Division (FJSD) has staff across the province in 25 locations providing in person and virtual services to support families going through separation and divorce, including those experiencing violence. FJSD puts great emphasis on ensuring

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staff have specialized knowledge about the dynamics of family violence (including coercive control) and its effect on families and children. Staff are specially trained and skilled at identifying and responding to these issues in practice, including determinations related to the appropriateness of dispute resolution services.

- In addition to province-wide voluntary services, through the Early Resolution Program currently operating in Victoria, Surrey and Port Coquitlam, FJSD provides mandatory, consistent, individual screening for family violence and safety planning for all parties in all family law matters in Provincial Court. Further expansion of the Program is planned for 2025/26.
- In February 2024, British Columbia announced \$29.1M over three years to expand financial eligibility for family legal aid services, improve intake capacity and create a new multidisciplinary trauma-informed family law clinic for people experiencing family violence. The Family Law Centre opened in December 2024, and provides legal representation and related services, both in person and virtually, to meaningfully stabilize eligible client's legal situations.

Contact: Jodi Roach, ED, Family Policy, Legislation & Transformation Division	Mobile: ^{Personal Security}
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: February 24th, 2025

Independent Rights Advice Service

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Ministry of Attorney General (MAG) is leading the implementation of an Independent Rights Advice Service for individuals who are involuntarily admitted under the *Mental Health Act*. The Rights Advice Service helps to ensure that the BC Government is meeting its constitutional obligations to protect the Charter rights of individuals who are involuntarily detained.
- The Rights Advice Service is delivered by the Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division, in partnership with several non-profit community partners.
- The Rights Advice Service is now available at all 75 designated facilities under the *Mental Health Act*. In March, the service will start being rolled out to involuntary patients living in the community on extended leave.
- In June 2022, the BC Government passed amendments to the *Mental Health Act* that introduced the right to meet with a Rights Advisor. The amendments will be brought into force once the Rights Advice Service is available to all involuntary patients across BC. Currently, early 2026 is targeted for bringing these amendments into force.

FINANCES:

- The Rights Advice Service has a base budget of \$2.637M in 2025/26.
- The base budget includes up to \$1.954M in contracted costs to the Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division, to deliver the Rights Advice Service.
- This base budget includes additional funding for downstream costs for:
 - The Mental Health Review Board, for an expected increase in requests for review board hearings, as more people are aware of their right to a review board hearing after meeting with a Rights Advisor.
 - Legal Aid BC for an expected increase in requests for legal representation at review board hearings and in court as more people are aware of their right to review board hearings and court applications.
- There is one Director (1 FTE) in Justice Services Branch assigned to support service implementation, policy development, program evaluation, and ongoing contract management.

Advice/Recommendations

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STATISTICS:

- There are currently 11 Rights Advisors located in communities across BC.
- As of February 12, 2025, there have been 596 requests for Rights Advice received and 448 meetings completed.
- Eighty-nine percent of people who met with a Rights Advisor reported the desired advice was provided during the meeting.

BACKGROUND:

- MAG, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development, is leading the implementation of a Rights Advice Service for individuals who are involuntarily admitted under the *Mental Health Act*. The Rights Advice Service employs Rights Advisors who meet with patients to explain their rights under the *Mental Health Act*, assist them to exercise these rights (e.g., applying for a review board hearing), and refer individuals to a lawyer or other legal help if requested.
- The Rights Advice Service is delivered by the Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division, in partnership with several non-profit community partners. The contract for this service is administered by the Legal Access Policy Division within Justice Services Branch.
- The Rights Advice Service is now available at all 75 designated facilities under the *Mental Health Act*. The Rights Advice Service is primarily virtual, with most meetings taking place by phone or videoconference. In-person service is available in some facilities to support those who may struggle to communicate virtually.
- Beginning on March 1st, the Rights Advice Service will start being rolled out to involuntary patients who are living in the community on extended leave. These patients will have the option to directly book their own virtual meeting with a Rights Advisor. The service is expected to be available to all patients on extended leave by late June 2025.
- In June 2022, the Province passed amendments to the *Mental Health Act* to lay the foundation for the Rights Advice Service. These amendments introduced a new *Part 5 – Rights Advice* to the Act, which is the responsibility of MAG. All other parts of the *Mental Health Act* are the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. The new *Part 5 – Rights Advice* sets out the duties and responsibilities of the Rights Advice Service, as well as the duties of directors of designated mental health facilities to facilitate access to the service.

Contact: Shannon Gibson, Director, Mental Health Act Rights Service, Legal Access Policy Division

Mobile: Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 3, 2025

Independent Investigations Office

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Independent Investigations Office of BC (IIO) is a civilian-led oversight of law enforcement body, mandated to investigate incidents of death or serious harm involving police officers and special provincial constables in British Columbia. The IIO's authority is derived from the *Police Act*, and the IIO is established as a police force in the *Act*.
- Key matters the IIO continue to address include:
 - Concerns of low charge approval rates and low prosecution rates of IIO cases by the BC Prosecution Service,
 - The over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in the IIO's investigations,
 - The duty of officers to cooperate with the IIO's investigations, and
 - The use of body-worn camera footage in the IIO's investigations.

FINANCES:

\$ in Millions	2024/2025 Estimates Restated	Estimates 2025/26
Budget	\$12.428	\$12.652
FTEs	78	78

Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

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STATISTICS:

Staffing

- With the additional funding provided to the IIO in 2023, the IIO was able to hire additional investigators and is now operating with an almost full complement of 34 frontline investigators.
 - The IIO's current frontline investigator staffing composition consists of 53% of staff without previous policing experience, and 47% with previous policing experience.
- Personal Information
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- The IIO is considering a restructuring of its leadership staffing complement to ensure operational effectiveness.

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Investigations

- The IIO received 222 notifications by the end of Q3 this fiscal year (2024/2025) which is down from 277 for this time last fiscal year.
- Of the 222 notifications received, the IIO has commenced 127 investigations (as of December 31, 2024). During the same period last fiscal year, the IIO had commenced 129 investigations.
- To date in fiscal year 2024/25, the IIO has concluded 32 investigations with the release of a public report, concluded 35 investigations with the publication of a media release, and referred 10 investigations to Crown Counsel for consideration of charges.

Average Length of Time to Conclude an Investigation

- At the end of Q3 of fiscal year 2024/25, the average number of days to complete an investigation was 54 which is a decrease from the average of 64 days at Q3 of 2023/2024.
- The decrease in time to conclude an investigation can be attributed to a more stabilized staffing complement.

BACKGROUND:

- The IIO is established within the Ministry of Attorney General as a separate voted appropriation to support the independence of the office.
- Jessica Berglund is the new Chief Civilian Director (CCD) of the IIO. She was appointed September 20, 2024, for a five-year term.
- Some aspects of the IIO's operations fall under the superintendence of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. These matters include standards related to training, use of force, cooperation between law enforcement agencies, and investigative standards.
- Upon completion of an IIO investigation, the CCD of the IIO considers whether or not there are reasonable grounds to believe that an officer may have committed an offence. If the CCD concludes those grounds exist, she may refer the matter to Crown Counsel for consideration of charges. If the CCD does not find that reasonable grounds exist, a public report that includes the reasons for the decision, a synopsis of the incident, and a summary of the results of the investigation is published on the IIO website if it is in the public interest to do so.

Contact: Alanna Valentine-Pickett, A/ED, Tribunals and Agencies Support Division	Mobile: ^{Personal Security}
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 03, 2025

Labour Relations Board

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Labour Relations Board (the Board) is currently unable to meet statutory timelines.
- The timelines in which board matters must be heard and/or decided are among the shortest of all tribunals in British Columbia.
- This is made more challenging by the fact that the Board does not have enough resources to manage its current caseload, and is challenged with recruitment and retention of qualified candidates due to not being able to provide competitive remuneration rates compared to other organizations in the industry. This has led to significant budget pressures and decreased capacity.
- The Board's budget pressures are primarily driven by three factors:
 - (1) Changes in practice and increased caseloads,
 - (2) statutory timelines, and
 - (3) recruitment and retention issues, particularly with respect to remuneration.
- In 2022, following prior amendments made in 2019, the *Labour Relations Code* (the Code) was amended to make it easier for employees to access their rights to unionize. The result was that applications for certification made to the Board more than doubled between 2021 and 2023.
- The Board employs bargaining unit staff, excluded staff, and Order in Council (OIC) appointees. While the bargaining unit staff are not part of the public service; their staff association negotiates a collective agreement similar to the BCGEU, especially regarding wages and benefits. However, Board staff earn significantly less than their counterparts at other tribunals, posing challenges for pay equity, recruitment and retention.
- The allowable remuneration under the Treasury Board Directive 1-24 for OIC appointees is insufficient, and the Board struggles to attract qualified candidates with the talent and experience required.
- The Board has been allocated additional funding for the last two fiscal years from within the broader tribunal sector budget to assist with addressing its ongoing resourcing challenges and caseload pressures.

FINANCES:

- The Board has a budget of \$6.613 million in 2025/26 and is supported by 43 FTEs (members and staff in full and part-time positions).

BACKGROUND:

- The Code establishes a comprehensive statutory framework for all aspects of collective bargaining for provincially regulated employers, employees, and trade unions.
- The Board administers the Code. By certifying a union as a bargaining agent for a group of employees, it provides the only legal mechanism by which that group of employees can compel their employer to bargain collectively with them, thereby giving effect to their Charter protected right of association (enshrined in Section 2(d)).
- In 2018, Code Review Committee recommendations resulted in legislative amendments being made in 2019 and in 2022, both of which significantly impacted the Board's mandate and workload.
- In 2019, the most significant amendments included:
 - Shortening the time period which the Board must conduct a representation vote, from 10 days to 5 business days.
 - Establishing a "raiding season" in the construction industry which is limited to July and August of each year, meaning the Board receives an onslaught of those application types during the summer months.
 - Expanding the Code's successorship protection to instances of contract-flipping in designated industries, opening up a whole new set of application types;
 - Making first collective bargaining mediation more broadly available to new parties to a collective bargaining relationship; and
 - Expanding the Board's mediation mandate in situations where an adjustment plan is necessary under Section 54 of the Code.
- In 2022, the Code was amended to introduce single step certification. Under this model, a union that applies to the Board with support of more than 55% of employees in the proposed bargaining unit will be certified to represent that unit of employees without the need for a representation vote.
- In 2024/25 the Board lost three Vice Chairs (one third of its complement) due to insufficient remuneration and workload pressures.

Contact: Alanna Valentine-Pickett, A/ED, Tribunals and Agency Support Division, JSB

Mobile: ^{Personal Security}

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: February 26, 2025

Provincially Funded Legal Services

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Government recognizes the importance of legal aid services for British Columbians and continues to deliver and fund a continuum of legal services to assist British Columbians in addressing their legal issues, and, to increase access to justice. Services include:
 - Legal Aid BC
 - Indigenous Justice Centres
 - Family Justice Services
 - Provincial Support of Legal Clinics
- The Province also funds a network of 15 Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC), which provide legal advice, information, and representation in both criminal and child protection matters for Indigenous people. IJCs take a holistic approach to client and community wellness by facilitating connections to various supports, including guidance from Elders and Knowledge Keepers, housing assistance, mental health and addictions treatment, and employment services.
 - *Cross Reference - Estimates Note 31: Indigenous Justice Centres (IJS).*
- Family Justices Services Division (FJSD) has staff across the province at Justice Access Centres and Family Justice Centres, which provide a variety of supports for families, including those experiencing violence. As a key part of reforms to the Provincial Court Family Rules, the Early Resolution Model builds on existing family justice services to provide individuals with family law matters early access to information and referrals, screening for family violence, assistance resolving disputes out of court, and help preparing for court.
 - *Cross Reference - Estimates Note 39: Early Resolution Program Expansion (JSB).*
- The Province has also committed annual funding to support a network of legal clinics administered by the Law Foundation, as well as annual funding to support the Society for Children and Youth of BC.

FINANCES:

Legal Aid BC

- In 2025/26, LABC has a total budget of \$158.320M and receives 95% of its funding from the provincial and federal governments (\$149.960M in 2025/26) with the remainder of funding received from the Law Foundation and the Notary Foundation.

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- Budget 2025 funding includes:
 - \$1.699M in additional provincial funding to expand family legal aid, including the creation of a multidisciplinary intensive family law clinic, expanding eligibility for family law legal aid services, and increasing intake capacity.
 - \$1.590M in additional provincial funding for ratified agreements under the Shared Recovery Mandate.
 - \$0.540M in additional provincial funding for criminal legal aid services to support an expansion of the Supreme Court Judicial complement.
 - \$0.098M in additional provincial funding to provide legal advice services for the incremental expansion of the early resolution program.
 - -\$3.864M adjustment in federal funding for Immigration and Refugee Legal Aid Services.

Provincial Support of Legal Clinics

- The Province provides \$2.00M annually to the Law Foundation to support a network of poverty law and specialized law (disability, housing, immigration and refugee, and child and youth) legal clinics.
- The Province also provides \$0.730M annually to the Society for Children and Youth to deliver free legal information, advice and representation for children and youth.

STATISTICS:

Legal Aid Applications (Numbers from Annual Service Plan Report 2023/24)

This table shows the number of applications for representation services (service requests) by interview date, and the percentage of those applications that were approved.

Area of Law	2023/24		2022/23		2021/22	
	Service Requests	Percentage Approved	Service Requests	Percentage Approved	Service Requests	Percentage Approved
Criminal	22,021	86.6%	21,851	84.4%	21,460	82.3%
Family	9,087	65.4%	8,933	59.3%	8,531	49.4%
CFCSA	2,317	74.7%	2,386	70.1%	2,435	66.1%
Immigration	5,448	85.4%	3,343	84.4%	1,876	75.6%
Appeals of Administrative Tribunal Decisions	96	27.1%	125	25.6%	106	43.4%

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Total	38,969	80.7%	36,638	77.1%	34,408	72.2%
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Representation Contracts Issued

This table shows the number of contracts issued (contract count) for representation services, by contract issued date.

Area of Law	Contract Count		
	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Criminal	23,039	21,973	20,716
Family	7,864	6,736	5,577
CFCSA	2,174	2,070	2,061
Immigration	5,006	3,074	1,605
Appeals of Administrative Tribunal Decisions	35	38	52
Total	38,118	33,891	30,011

BACKGROUND:Legal Aid BC

- LABC is the key provider of legal aid services on behalf of the BC government. 95% of LABC's funding is provided by the provincial and federal governments.
- The services provided by LABC include information, advice, and representation for financially eligible persons for family, child protection, and criminal law matters.
- Legal representation is also available for immigration and refugee matters, Mental Health Review Board Hearings, BC Review Board hearings, and those who have a prison issue for which the Charter of Rights and Freedoms establishes a right to counsel.
- As of January 31, 2025, LABC had a total of 266 FTEs, including intake and administrative staff as well as lawyers and managers.
- The Family Law Centre, a new multidisciplinary intensive family law clinic, opened in December 2024. The Family Law Centre offers legal representation and related services, to eligible clients experiencing family violence, to meaningfully stabilize their family law situation.
- The Family Law Centre has physical locations in Surrey and Victoria, and provides virtual and mobile services in Duncan, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nanaimo and Prince George.
- This funding also enabled LABC to expand financial eligibility to increase the number of individuals who are eligible for family legal aid services (starting in April 2024), and to expand intake capacity to ensure more people have timely access to legal aid services.

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- In April 2025 and April 2026, further increases will be made to financial eligibility for family legal aid services to ensure these thresholds align with the most recently released *Market Basket Measure*, plus 2%.

Provincial Support of Legal Clinics

- The network of legal clinics is administered by the Law Foundation of BC.
- The network consists of community law clinics located in:
 - Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, and Surrey
- As well as four speciality clinics for housing law, disability law, immigration and refugee law, and child and youth clinic.
 - Each of the specialty clinics are located in Vancouver but can assist people throughout the province.
- Each annual \$250,000 clinic grant funds one staff lawyer, one support staff position, as well as associated program and administrative costs.
- The clinics provide free legal information, advice, and representation to low-income individuals in locations where a need for poverty law and specialized services are identified. In addition, the clinic lawyers provide public legal education, and support Law Foundation funded advocates and lawyers in the province through resources, training, and advice.
- The Society for Children and Youth's Child and Youth Legal Centre delivers free legal information, advice and representation for children and youth experiencing problems relating to family law, child protection, a breach of human rights and many other legal issues. The Society for Children and Youth is the only program in BC that delivers the full range of legal services to children and youth.

Contact: Tania Betiku, A/ED, Legal Access Policy Division, JSB

Mobile:

Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 05, 2025

Legal Professions Regulatory Reform

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The *Legal Professions Act* (the Act) was enacted in May 2024.
- The Act consolidates the regulation of all regulated legal service providers in BC under one statute and under a new regulatory body called Legal Professions British Columbia.
- The Act also creates a new category of legal service provider called “regulated paralegals”.
- Most of the Act’s provisions are not yet in force, to give the current regulators (the Law Society of British Columbia and the Society of Notaries Public of British Columbia) and other participants the time needed to plan for an orderly transition to the new regulatory framework.
- A transitional board and transitional Indigenous council have been established and are meeting regularly to plan for the amalgamation.

FINANCES:

- This project relates to existing independent regulators that are self-funded through fees paid by licensees. The new regulator established under the Act will also be self-funded.
- It is not anticipated that there will be associated financial implications for Government.

BACKGROUND:

- Access to legal help (e.g. to a professional) is one component of a broader access to justice problem. At present, when a person has a legal problem, their choices are generally limited to hiring a lawyer or trying to solve the problem by themselves.
- The Act creates new options for people in BC by:
 - Creating a new category of legal professional called a “regulated paralegal”
 - Expanding the scope of practice for notaries public
 - Creating a limited licence model for people interested in providing limited legal services to the public, outside a common scope of practice
- The Act establishes a new regulatory body governed by a 17-member board: 9 lawyers (5 elected and 4 appointed by the board), 3 notaries (2 elected and 1 appointed by the board), 2 regulated paralegals, and 3 members appointed by Government, reflecting:
 - a majority of lawyers (9/17)

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- a supermajority of licensees (14/17)
- a minority of government appointees (3/17)
- a removal of the Attorney General as a board member, as per the current model in place at the Law Society
- The Act includes numerous components intended to move reconciliation forward. This includes a requirement for at least 2 Indigenous board members (one must be from a BC First Nation), the creation of an Indigenous Council as a component of the governance framework, and a specific authority for the regulator to create dispute resolution processes that reflect or are influenced by Indigenous practices.
- Most of the Act's provisions are not yet in force, to give the current regulators (the Law Society and the Notaries Society) and other participants the time needed to plan for an orderly transition to the new regulatory framework.
- Significant work is underway to prepare for the coming into force of the remaining provisions in the Act:

Advice/Recommendations

- The remaining provisions will be brought into force by regulation at a date in the future when all necessary transitional matters have been addressed.

Contact: Katie Armitage, Legal Counsel, JSB

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Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 4, 2025

Money Judgment Registry and Implementation

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Money Judgment Enforcement Act (Bill 27) was enacted October 24, 2023.

Advice/Recommendations

- A key part of the Money Judgment Enforcement Act ("MJE") is that it is a citizen-oriented process that reduces the costs associated with enforcing a judgment and increases the speed with which a judgment creditor can initiate enforcement proceedings. This is accomplished by eliminating court based administrative steps from the process.
- The MJE also leverages technology by allowing for the online registration of judgments in a Money Judgment Registry, which will be located in the Personal Property Registry ("PPR"). The PPR is administered by Registry Services (Ministry of Citizens' Services).

Advice/Recommendations

- Enforcement services (seizure and sale of property) will continue to be conducted by private contractors known as Court Bailiffs.
 - Court Bailiffs will have new powers under the MJE that will allow them to seize all types of property, including co-owned property, accounts, licenses and intellectual property. These powers will improve the service they can provide to judgment creditors.

FINANCES:

- N/A

BACKGROUND:

- While the MJEAs legislation will introduce some changes to the existing model,^{Advice/Recommendations}

Contact: Tyler Nyvall, Legal Counsel, JSB	Mobile: ^{Personal Security}
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: May 1, 2025

Office of the Human Rights Commissioner – Adult Guardianship Act Inquiry

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner conducted an inquiry into involuntary detentions under the *Adult Guardianship Act*, which sets out the province's legislative framework for providing support and assistance to adults who are suffering abuse, neglect or self-neglect, and who are unable to seek support and assistance on their own.
- In April 2025, the Commissioner released her report, making five findings, and ten recommendations to the Ministry of Attorney General (4), the Ministry of Health (5) and designated agencies (1).
- Designated agencies (the responders under the Act)¹ may take actions, without the adult's agreement, in circumstances where there is serious risk to the adult (i.e. it is necessary to act without delay to preserve the adult's life, prevent serious physical or mental harm to the adult, or protect the adult's property from significant loss or damage).
- In some emergency situations, designated agencies may hold the adult, for example, in hospital or other care facility, to protect them from the circumstances of abuse, neglect or self-neglect.
- The Ministry of Attorney General and the Ministry of Health have been engaged in a review of the adult abuse and neglect framework under the *Adult Guardianship Act*.
- The Ministry of Attorney General appreciates the Commissioner's work in this area.
- The Ministry generally accepts the underlying intent and objectives of most of the Commissioner's recommendations directed to MAG, which align with what government heard during engagement with interested parties as part of its review.

FINANCES:

- Implementation of the Commissioner's recommendations would, in many instances, have financial implications. The extent of these financial implications would vary based on the recommendation; and further analysis would be required to assess the scope of these implications. Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

¹ The designated agencies are the five health authorities, Community Living BC, and Providence Health Care.

BACKGROUND:

- The Human Rights Commissioner is an Officer of the Legislature, appointed by the Legislative Assembly under the *Human Rights Code*.
- The current Commissioner is Kasari Govender, KC, who was re-appointed for a second 5-year term on September 3, 2024.
- The Commissioner is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights, including by, for example:
 - Identifying and promoting the elimination of discriminatory practices, policies and programs;
 - Publishing reports, making recommendations or using other means to prevent or eliminate discriminatory practices, policies and guidelines;
 - Developing and delivering public information and education about human rights;
 - Examining and making recommendations respecting the human rights implications of any policy, program or legislation; and
 - Promoting compliance with international human rights obligations.
- The Commissioner may also conduct an inquiry if the Commissioner is of the opinion that an inquiry into a matter would promote or protect human rights, or if the Legislative Assembly or any of its committees refers a matter to the Commissioner for inquiry and report.

Contact: Andrea Buzbuzian, Legal Counsel, JSB

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: April 15, 2025

Cost Recovery

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Legal Services Branch (“LSB”) of the Ministry of Attorney General recovers the costs associated with providing most legal services to government.
- The charge-back rates were last reviewed and increased to be effective for April 2024.

FINANCES:

- The Legal Services Branch’s estimates budget in 2025/26 is \$43.284 million net of recoveries of \$117.892 million against expenditures of \$161.176 million

BACKGROUND:

Legal Information

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Contact: Richard Peachman, Director of Finance	Tel: 778-974-2927	Mobile: Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 3, 2025

Crown Proceeding Act Settlements

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The *Crown Proceeding Act* ("CPA") vote is a statutory appropriation. Expenditures to the account can be of three (major) types:
 1. payments as a result of judgements;
 2. payments as a result of settlements; and
 3. the creation of liabilities where there is a reasonable prospect of loss, and where that loss can be quantified. These liabilities are charged to the *Crown Proceeding Act* account on an accrual basis when the prospect of loss and quantum of loss can be determined with reasonable certainty.
- Settlement amounts can only be disclosed once a proceeding has concluded, and the Attorney General has tabled the annual report before the Legislature under s.15 of the CPA. This is the only mechanism for the disclosure of information relating to settlement amounts.

FINANCES:

- Estimates – Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2026 - Ministry of Attorney General – Vote 14 - Ministry Operations.
- Estimates – Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2026 - Ministry of Attorney General – Vote 16 - *Crown Proceeding Act*.
- The CPA Budget is \$24.5M in 2025/26. This budget is used to pay judgments, arbitration awards, settlements, and court ordered costs. Related staffing and administration costs are funded through the Legal Services Branch.

BACKGROUND:

- Litigation defence costs incurred to defend the Province are recovered by the Ministry of Attorney General – Legal Services Branch from client ministries. Settlements and judgments are paid through the CPA vote.
- The CPA establishes both the process and the timing of disclosure of settlement amounts. Section 15 requires that prescribed information be tabled in the Legislature each year and thus be released publicly.

Legal Information

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Legal Information

Contact: Kyle Pollner (LSB)	Tel: 778-974-2928	Mobile: Personal Security
Contact: Kate Saunders (LSB)	Tel: 250-356-8592	Mobile: Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated Date: March 6, 2025

Directives on Civil Litigation involving Indigenous Peoples

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- On April 21, 2022, the Province released the Directives on Civil Litigation involving Indigenous Peoples (the “Directives”).
- The purpose of the Directives is to improve the conduct of litigation involving Indigenous peoples in a manner that considers Indigenous human rights, constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights, and upholds the honour of the Crown in all matters involving the Indigenous peoples of British Columbia.
- A core objective of the Directives is to confirm an approach to litigation that prioritizes and promotes resolution, innovation and negotiated settlement, and that seeks to narrow or avoid potential litigation.
- The Province respects the right of Indigenous Peoples to choose their preferred forum to resolve legal issues, including the courts. In some instances, matters may require legal clarification or definition, and litigation may be unavoidable. When matters do result in litigation, these new directives instruct counsel to engage honourably and to assist the court constructively, expeditiously, and effectively.
- All counsel must follow these Directives in the approaches, positions and decisions taken on behalf of the Attorney General of British Columbia in civil litigation involving Indigenous peoples.

FINANCES:

- The CPA Budget is \$24.5M in 2025/26. This budget is used to pay judgments, arbitration awards, settlements and court ordered costs.

BACKGROUND

- Item 2.3 of the “Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan” was to:
 - Issue guidelines from the Attorney General of BC to the Ministry of Attorney General legal counsel regarding the conduct of civil litigation involving the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- The Directives were released on April 21, 2022 and were published in the British Columbia Gazette on May 12, 2022.

Legal Information

Contact: Paul Yearwood, Supervising Counsel, LSB

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 3, 2025

Indemnity Policy and Practices Overview

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Indemnity coverage is provided to government employees under the *Excluded Employees (Legal Proceedings) Indemnity Regulation* (the Regulation), under collective agreements, and where applicable, by way of *ad hoc* special indemnities pursuant to section 72 of the *Financial Administration Act*, when indemnity coverage is not otherwise available.
- Indemnity coverage under the Regulation is available to current or former excluded employees and members of the executive branch of government. Coverage is not available under the Regulation for Members of the Legislative Assembly, except for those serving as members of the Executive Council and in relation to matters arising from that role.
- Providing legal assistance and indemnities to government employees acting in the course of their employment is essential to the protection of the Crown's interest, the fair treatment of government employees, and the effective management of government.

If asked about the total amount expended on employee indemnities

- The Risk Management Branch of the Ministry of Finance is the appropriate source of this information.

If asked about a specific indemnity

- Government cannot disclose information about indemnity coverage, including whether coverage has been requested, provided, denied, or terminated. The only exceptions are where disclosure is required by law; disclosure is to persons involved in the coverage; or the person's involved consent. [If pressed: Questions regarding the potential existence of specific indemnities are better answered by my colleague the Honourable Brenda Bailey, Minister of Finance].

FINANCES:

- Refer to the Risk Management Branch of the Ministry of Finance.

BACKGROUND:

- Providing legal assistance and indemnification to employees serves the public interest in effective government by protecting Crown's interests, motivating public servants to fully cooperate in legal and regulatory proceedings, protecting the Crown from vicarious liability by ensuring effective legal representation of employees, ensuring the fair treatment of employees, assisting the public service to attract and retain high quality employees, and protecting employees from loss, which enables them to carry out their

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duties in good faith without fear of the burden of financial loss or other adverse impacts if litigation occurs.

- The Regulation and applicable collective agreements set out the circumstances when indemnity coverage is available, coverage eligibility requirements, and establish processes for granting and receiving indemnity coverage.
- Government provides *ad hoc* special indemnity coverage in relation to circumstances analogous to those covered by the Regulation, under section 72 of the *Financial Administration Act* and section 2 of the *Indemnities and Guarantees Regulation*. In such circumstances, coverage is not available to employees under the Regulation or a collective agreement, but it is in the public interest to provide coverage.
- The Risk Management Branch of the Ministry of Finance is the appropriate source of information about the total amount expended on indemnities. Except in very limited circumstances, government cannot disclose information about coverage provided to public servants and Executive Council members.
- When a specific indemnity has been concluded under the Regulation, the amount of the indemnity is disclosed in the aggregate with other indemnities concluding within the same fiscal year. The Risk Management Branch discloses this information in the Consolidated Revenue Fund Guarantees and Indemnities Authorized and Issued Report for each fiscal year.

Contact: Kelly Hazlett, Legal Counsel, Legal Services Branch
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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: April 16, 2025

Litigation Costs

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Information regarding the cost of litigation is generally privileged and cannot be disclosed. If an exception is to be made, it can only be done after the litigation has concluded, and any other privilege that attaches must be considered.
- Litigation costs include the hourly rate for legal services provided to the Province, as well as disbursement costs (including expert reports and travel) incurred by the Province with respect to a legal proceeding.
- The Legal Services Branch maintains a record of all litigation costs.

FINANCES:

- The CPA Budget is \$24.5M in 2025/26. This budget is used to pay judgments, arbitration awards, settlements and court ordered costs.

BACKGROUND:

Legal Information

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Contact: Kate Saunders, Supervising Counsel - Litigation (LSB)	Tel: 250-356-8592	Mobile: Government Financial Information

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: April 16, 2025

Outside Counsel Retainers

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The *Attorney General Act* establishes the Attorney General's roles as the legal advisor to government and the representative of government in legal proceedings.
- The Legal Services Branch ("LSB") is empowered under the Act to provide legal advice to client ministries and retain, contract, or employ persons to provide legal services.
- Legal services are generally provided to ministries and agencies by legal counsel employed within LSB. However, where there is a conflict, a requirement for particular expertise, services in another geographic area, and/or workload pressures, outside counsel are retained. These retainers are supervised by LSB legal counsel.
- Outside counsel fees are managed according to the Outside Counsel Fee Tariff. (See Appendix A in LSB ADM binder: Revised Fee Tariff.)

FINANCES:

- LSB's estimates budget in 2025/26 is \$43.284 million net of recoveries of \$117.892 million against expenditures of \$161.176 million.

BACKGROUND:

- Selection of outside counsel is carried out according to the following process, which ensures compliance with core government procurement policies:
 - Outside counsel are chosen from LSB's Outside Counsel Prequalified List. Outside counsel may prequalify by submitting an application to LSB including work history, years of call, expertise and references. If a firm is applying to get on the prequalified list, every lawyer in that firm who wishes to be qualified must submit the required information.
 - In addition, lawyers wishing to do government work directly with individuals at risk, such as children, must undergo a criminal record check.
 - Supervisors within LSB and client ministries must both approve outside counsel appointments. Final approval for outside counsel appointments rests with the Assistant Deputy Attorney General, LSB.
- The process is designed to be fair, accessible, efficient, transparent, cost-effective, well documented, accountable and enhances internal branch capacity where appropriate. The process ensures that necessary legal expertise is retained for particular tasks and complies with government general procurement policies and applicable agreements.

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Contact: Richard Peachman, Director of Finance	Tel: 778-974-2927	Mobile: Government Financial Information

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 05, 2025

Anti-Racism Act

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Province of BC has multiple initiatives underway across government to address racism, including:
 - Amendments to the Police Act, targeted for completion in 2026, to enhance police accountability and address systemic bias.
 - Addressing Indigenous-specific racism in healthcare, in response to the *In Plain Sight Report*, through policy reforms, anti-racism training, and structural changes in the healthcare system.
 - The Provincial K-12 Anti-Racism in Education Action Plan, released in January 2023, integrates anti-racism principles into school curricula, training for educators, and reporting mechanisms.
- The Anti-Racism Act (ARA) represents a whole-of-government approach to dismantling systemic racism in BC by embedding anti-racism principles across ministries, policies, and service delivery.
- The Act establishes two key streams to address systemic racism:
 - Indigenous-specific racism stream, which applies a distinctions-based approach to eliminate racism affecting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.
 - The systemic racism stream, which addresses the needs of racialized communities, guided by the Provincial Committee on Anti-Racism (PCAR). Established through Ministerial Order on January 30, 2025, PCAR is critical in advising the government on the legislation's implementation.
- The ARA mandates Government to align its action plan with:
 - Section 4 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), which ensures meaningful consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples.
 - Section 17 of the Anti-Racism Data Act (ARDA) integrates research priorities, data collection, and analysis on systemic and Indigenous-specific racism to drive evidence-based policy decisions.
- The Act supports long-term structural changes, including enhancing data transparency, embedding anti-racism measures in public services, and increasing government accountability to racialized and Indigenous communities.

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FINANCES:

- No dedicated budget was allocated for implementing.

STATISTICS:

- In British Columbia, the largest racialized communities based on the 2021 Census are Chinese (11.2%), South Asian (9.6%), Filipino (3.5%), Southeast Asian (1.5%), Korean (1.5%), West Asian (1.4%), Black (1.3%), Latin American (1.3%), Japanese (0.9%), and Arab (0.6%), reflecting the province's diverse population.
- According to Statistics Canada, the number of hate crimes reported by police in Canada rose from 3,355 incidents in 2021 to 3,576 in 2022, a 7% increase.
- In 2022, police-reported hate crimes recorded in Ontario (12.7 incidents per 100,000 Population), Nova Scotia (11.1 incidents per 100,000 Population) and British Columbia (10.2 incidents per 100,000 Population) recorded the highest hate crime rates (Statistics Canada, 2024).
- In 2023, Vancouver police investigated 265 hate crime reports, a 31% increase from the previous year. This surge was influenced by geopolitical events, which led to a 62% rise in antisemitic incidents, with 33 of 47 such incidents occurring after October 7, 2023.

BACKGROUND:

- The Province of BC has several initiatives underway across government to address racism, such as amendments to the *Police Act* targeted for completion in 2026, addressing Indigenous-specific racism in healthcare after following up on the "In Plain Sight" Report and the release of a provincial K-12 Anti-Racism in Education Action Plan in January 2023.
- The Act establishes two streams to address systemic racism: an Indigenous-specific racism stream, which focuses on identifying and eliminating Indigenous-specific racism using a distinctions-based approach, and systemic racism, which addresses the needs of racialized community members advised by the PCAR. The committee was established through a Ministerial Order on Jan 30, 2025, and is central in advising the provincial government on the legislation's implementation.

Contact: Haiqa Cheema, ADM, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism

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Personal Security

Last updated: March 5, 2025

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Government has a moral and ethical responsibility to tackle systemic racism in all its forms in the province.
- We know there are policy gaps and barriers to accessing programs, and this disproportionately impacts Indigenous people and racialized individuals.
- The *Anti-Racism Data Act* (the Act), which became law in June 2022, is an important tool to help the Province dismantle systemic racism. The Ministry of Attorney General and the Ministry of Citizens' Services worked collaboratively to develop the legislation.
- The Act enables government to collect and use demographic information such as race, gender and ancestry to identify and eliminate systemic racism.
- With this information, the Province can identify where there are barriers and improve access to government programs and services for Indigenous and racialized people.
- The implementation of the legislation is informed by Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee (the Committee).

BACKGROUND:

Current Research Priorities

- In May 2023, anti-racism research priorities for 2023-2025 were developed with the Committee and Indigenous Peoples.
- From June to October 2023, the Ministry conducted the BC Demographic Survey which was developed using feedback from the Anti-Racism Data Committee, Indigenous partners and racialized communities. More than 200,000 people responded to the survey.
- In May 2024, Government published research related to three research priority areas (education, health, and the BC Public Service) as part of its annual release of statistics under the Act.
- In spring 2025, Government will publish more research under the Act, as well as its 2025-2027 research priorities.
- To help mitigate harm to communities that can be caused by research, the Ministry of Citizens' Services have developed a mandatory 'Anti-Racism in Research' training and other anti-racism governance for researchers in the Data Innovation Program.
- This research allows Government to gain valuable insight into systemic racism and improve programs and services for all people in British Columbia.

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- The Ministry of Citizens' Services is responsible for implementation of the Act and can speak more to progress under the Act.

Distinctions between the Anti-Racism Act and the Anti-Racism Data Act

- In 2022, Government enacted the Anti-Racism Data Act to safely collect and use race-based information for the purposes of identifying and addressing systemic racism and advancing racial equity.
- This information will be used to help identify where people aren't getting equitable services as a result of systemic racism.
- In 2024, Government enacted the Anti-Racism Act, which requires government to take action on systemic racism uncovered through data collection and to provide supports to those who have been negatively impacted.

Distinctions between the Provincial Committee on Anti-Racism and the Anti-Racism Data Committee

- The Anti-Racism Data Committee (the Committee) was established under the Anti-Racism Data Act (ARDA).
- The Committee provides advice and recommendations on how government collects and uses data to address systemic racism and advance racial equity under ARDA.
- It also collaborates with government on data initiatives, such as research priorities and data standards, and reviews anti-racism research findings under ARDA prior to their release to prevent community harms.
- The Provincial Committee on Anti-Racism will use insights from research conducted through the Anti-Racism Data Act and other data sources to inform an action plan for addressing systemic racism under the *Anti-Racism Act*.

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Contact: Haiqa Cheema, ADM, Multiculturalism & Anti-Racism	Mobile:

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 03, 2025

Antisemitism and Islamophobia

SUMMARY OF ISSUE

- The Province is aware of the increase in reported hate-motivated crimes and incidents in B.C. tied to the ongoing conflict in Gaza.
- Hate-related crimes or incidents can have a long-term effect on people's well-being, and no one should have to face the aftermath and trauma of such incidents alone.
- While we strongly support the right of every individual to express their opinions and exercise their right to free speech, we firmly reject hate and violence as means of expression.
- We have expanded our anti-racism supports, including the Racist Incident Helpline, which has been operational since May 2024.
- The Helpline is a service that offers a low-barrier and safe alternative for those hesitant to approach police, by providing a confidential and supportive environment for victims.
- We are committed to making our province safer, more equitable and welcoming for all.

FINANCES:

- For FY2025/26, the Ministry will continue funding Resilience BC and Multiculturalism.
- Sustained investment of \$1.200 million through prior year decisions regarding the Racist Incident Helpline will ensure its accessibility and effectiveness

BACKGROUND:

- In 2023, British Columbia experienced a rise in police-reported hate crimes, reflecting a broader national trend.
- Hate crimes in Canada increased by 32%, rising from 3,612 incidents in 2022 to 4,777 in 2023, following an 8% increase in 2022 and a 72% surge from 2019 to 2021.
- Hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity grew by 12% in 2022, continuing a trend of yearly increases, while crimes targeting sexual orientation also rose by 12% in the same year.
- The majority (56%) of police-reported hate crimes during this period were non-violent offences, indicating a widespread issue highlighting various forms of discrimination beyond physical violence.
- There are over 80,000 Muslim-Canadians in the province of BC alone.
- Despite Muslims' long history in Canada and Islam being the second-largest religion, they continue to face challenges. In 2023, hate crimes against Muslims increased by 94%,

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rising from 109 incidents in 2022 to 211 incidents. This sharp rise shows the growing difficulties Muslim communities are facing across the country.

- Since the war in Gaza broke out, there has been a surge in hate crimes and protests in Vancouver, with the Vancouver Police investigating a 31% increase in hate crime reports from the previous year, including a 62% rise in antisemitic incidents.
- On October 30, 2023, Premier Eby announced a commitment to mandatory Holocaust education for high school students by the 2025-26 school year due to a rise in antisemitism in B.C.
 - This change will include the expansion of Grade 10 social studies curriculum to include more on discriminatory policies and injustices.
 - The development of this curriculum will involve the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, the Jewish community, and educational partners.
- The B.C. Hate Crimes Unit continues to play a crucial role in investigating and prosecuting hate-motivated offences, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable.
- In response to growing concerns, the Province is strengthening support for communities affected by antisemitism and Islamophobia:
 - The Racist Incident Helpline was launched May 2024, and will remain a critical resource, documenting incidents and offering support to victims of hate crimes.
 - The BC Prosecution Service revised its Hate Crimes policy to explicitly and unwaveringly categorize hate propaganda offences such as advocating or promoting genocide, public incitement of hatred, willful promotion of hatred and willful promotion of antisemitism, as hate crimes.
 - Anti-Hate Community Support Fund has allocated \$200,000 to the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver for security measures for community institutions, including synagogues.
 - The Provincial Policing Standards have been updated to help support police investigations involving hate crimes.
 - Government-funded Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Programs, including the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network, provide communities with resources, support, and education to combat antisemitism and Islamophobia.

Contact: Haiqa Cheema, ADM, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism

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Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March, 06, 2025

IDPAD and Anti-Black Racism Strategy

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Anti-Black racism is an ongoing issue in British Columbia, resulting in disproportionate barriers to People of African Descent (PAD) at all levels of society.
- Ongoing calls require action from the Province to support the advancement of PAD.
- Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and the federal government have recognized the International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD) by issuing action plans and investments in the community.
- The Province has an opportunity to take meaningful steps to address Anti-Black racism and deliver on commitment while aligning with the Anti-Racism Act (ARA) and the Historical Wrongs Framework.

FINANCES:

- No dedicated budget was allocated for IDPAD due to fiscal constraints.

STATISTICS:

- Large-scale Black immigration from Africa to Canada mainly occurred in recent years, rising from 16,000 people between 1980 and 1990 to 185,000 between 2011 and 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2023).
- The number of police-reported hate crimes targeting race or ethnicity almost doubled, with more crimes targeting the Black population at +318 incidents – making the Black population the most targeted group overall for 2020. (Statistics Canada, 2020).
- Despite the Canadian-born Black population aged 25 to 54 having similar educational attainment (29% with a bachelor's degree or higher) to the Canadian-born non-racialized population (28%), they earn only \$0.76 cents for every dollar earned by the latter. (Statistics Canada, 2021)
- Throughout history, the Black community has faced systemic obstacles in addressing their mental well-being. 38.3% of Black Canadians with poor or fair self-reported mental health used mental health services compared with 50.8% of white Canadians.

BACKGROUND:

- The deliberate and pervasive existence of systemic anti-Black racism has resulted in People of African Descent (PAD) being some of the poorest and most disempowered.
- Black people's historical experiences in Canada have involved enslavement and segregation and, more recently, over-policing, disenfranchisement, and exclusion.

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- In 2013, the UN declared 2015-2024 the International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD), calling for action on recognition, justice, and development. On December 16, 2024, the UN proclaimed a Second International Decade (2025-2034) to continue efforts against discrimination and systemic racism.
- Following a visit to Canada in 2017, the UN Working Group of Experts on PAD's report on Canada noted deep concern for the structural racism that lies at the core of many Canadian institutions and that Canada's history of enslavement, racial segregation, and marginalization has had a serious, negative impact on PAD.
- In 2021, the Parliamentary Secretary hosted a series of 10 community meetings with experts, leaders and advocates from Black communities and Ministers on themes ranging from education, justice and community safety, health, arts and culture, employment, migration, and housing.
 - Members of Black communities in B.C. provided recommendations to address long-standing and emerging issues of systemic racism.
- In 2021, the African Art and Cultural Community Contributor Society (AACCCS) received a \$0.100 million grant from the Province as the Resilience BC Community Convener on Anti-Black racism. In February 2022, AACCCS released its Black in BC Report, which identified the needs of Black British Columbians.

Contact: Haiqa Cheema, ADM, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism

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Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 03, 2025

Japanese Canadian Recognition

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- Our government recognizes the significant harm caused to Japanese Canadians as a result of government actions before, during and after the Second World War.
- That is why, to honour the Japanese Canadian community, we have committed to providing lasting recognition of the traumatic internment of more than 22,000 Japanese Canadians during World War II.
- Since 2019, we have been working with Japanese Canadian communities on a path forward that honours survivors and acknowledges these injustices.
- As a result of engagement with the community, through the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), we are supporting the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society (JCLS) and their community partners with a \$100 million funding package to deliver new initiatives and community programs.
- The Province is working in collaboration with the JCLS to support these important initiatives during the coming months and years.

STATISTICS:

- During World War II, approximately 22,000 Japanese Canadians were forcibly removed from coastal B.C. and interned in the Interior.
- In 1942, the coastal population of Japanese Canadians was nearly 22,000 people, 70% of whom had been born and raised in Canada.
- The forced uprooting, dispossession and permanent displacement of approximately 2.6% of the B.C. population tore apart families, communities, identities, livelihoods and deep connections to place.
- According to Statistics Canada, B.C. was the Province with the highest population of Japanese Canadians at 1.1% (54,640) in 2021.

BACKGROUND:

- In December 2022, the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives was mandated by the Premier to "work with the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society to deliver the Province's redress initiatives that honour the legacy of Japanese Canadians in B.C."
- NAJC submitted several proposals to the Province in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 outlining the level of recognition they are seeking. In the most recent submission, the JCLS asked for funding and support for the following initiatives:

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- **Health and Wellness** – implement health and wellness programs for internment-era survivors and support intergenerational trauma counselling.
- **Heritage, Community and Education** – preservation and access to Japanese Canadian history and heritage, as well as the development of teaching materials and updating curriculum for Japanese Canadian history in B.C. schools.
- **Monument** – to commemorate and remember.
- **Community** – create recreational and cultural space.
- In May 2022, the Province announced a \$100 million redress package to provide lasting recognition of historical wrongs committed by the Province against Japanese Canadians during the Second World War.
- Funding has been allocated for construction and maintenance of a Monument and Gardens.

MONUMENT PROJECT UPDATE:

- The Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Branch is leading a community engagement process in 2024/2025 to guide the next steps for the monument project.
- A website was launched by the Province to update citizens about the Japanese Canadian Monument Park project.
- KPMB Architects has been engaged as the consultant for the monument project, with the next round of community engagement taking place at end of March 2025 to provide updates and gather input on the project's progress.
- The project is currently in the design and planning phase, with a focus on ensuring historical accuracy and meaningful representation.

Contact: Haiqa Cheema, ADM, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism

Mobile:

Personal Security

2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 03, 2025

Racist Incident Helpline

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- In November 2023, the Premier and the Attorney General announced that a Racist Incident Helpline would be launched in Spring 2024. This initiative was developed as part of a response to a significant increase in hate crimes and racist incidents reported to police throughout B.C. in recent years,
- The Racist Incident Helpline officially launched in May 2024 and is an important part of our work to build a safer and more inclusive province for everyone.
- The helpline is a trauma-informed, multilingual service, that provides a culturally safe platform for witnesses or victims of hate to report an incident and receive referrals to community support programs, including counseling.
- The Helpline is:
 - Open from 9 am to 5 pm on weekdays;
 - Accessible via phone at 1 833 457-5463 (1 833 HLP-LINE)
 - A multilingual service;
 - Toll-free;
 - A culturally safe venue for marginalized people;
 - Delivered by an agency that is not police or law-enforcement related; and
 - Functions as a place where witnesses or victims of hate can report and validate their experience and receive emotional support.
- Outside of the 9 am to 5 pm window, callers can leave voice messages with information to facilitate a callback.
- Helpline staff are trained in responding to racist incidents in a trauma-informed way, by providing emotional support and information about resources available to the caller.
- 32 community organizations are providing mental health, peer support, and counselling services for victims of racism and hate across the province.
- The establishment of this helpline directly addresses recommendation 5 from the BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner's March 2023 report *From Hate to Hope*.
- The helpline will lower barriers for people to report a racist incident and makes it easier for individuals reporting the incident to access community level supports for the harms they may have experienced.
- The anonymized data collected from the helpline will be used to support anti-racism programs, services and initiatives in B.C.

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FINANCES:

- Budget 2025 includes \$3.026 million allocated to the Racist Incident Helpline to provide community supports and operational costs for the Helpline.

STATISTICS:

- In 2023, Canada experienced a 32% increase in reported hate crimes, rising from 3,612 incidents in 2022 to 4,777 in 2023, following an 8% increase in 2022 and a 72% surge from 2019 to 2021.
- The majority (56%) of police-reported hate crimes were non-violent offences, indicating a widespread issue of various forms of discrimination beyond physical violence.
- Racist Incident Helpline Data from May 2024 – March 10, 2025:
 - Total Calls Received to Date: 612
 - Total Community Support Referrals Made: 1,608

BACKGROUND:

- The former Attorney General announced on April 30, 2021, that a helpline would be created in B.C. in response to the recent increase in racist activities.
- On March 7, 2023, the BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner recommended the government create, fund and support a community-led, province-wide system for reporting hate incidents.
- On November 15, 2023, the Premier and the AG announced that the Province would launch the racist incident helpline in Spring 2024.
- The Province is collaborating with United Way, a long-standing service provider of helplines such as VictimLink, to deliver the racist incident helpline.
- The Helpline offers multilingual services, extensive referral options, counselling and a community support system to create a safe space for reporting racist incidents.
- The Helpline will collect anonymized data from to inform resource allocation to fight racism.

With the escalation of violence in the Middle East and increased reports of antisemitism and Islamophobia, community members asked for a central helpline to report hate.

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2025/2026 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 03, 2025

Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- All British Columbians have the right to feel safe in their communities. However, since the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in reported hate-related crimes.
- The government is addressing systemic racism through the implementation of the Anti-Racism Data Act and the development of broader anti-racism legislation, but dismantling systemic racism in B.C. also requires direct collaboration with communities.
- The Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network provides a strategic and coordinated response to racism and hate in B.C. with community-led anti-racism and anti-hate initiatives at the local and regional levels.
- The Network operates under a Hub and Spoke model, with a centralized “hub” supporting 35 “spoke organizations” that lead anti-racism and anti-hate efforts in 40 communities across the province.
- Currently, the program is undergoing an evaluation process to assess its impact and identify areas for improvement. A new cycle of the Hub and Spoke model will begin next year, and the program will go through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to establish a new hub and spokes across the province based on the evaluation and recommendations.

FINANCES:

- The annual program budget for Resilience BC is \$540,000:
 - \$240,000 for the hub; and
 - \$300,000 for community spokes.

STATISTICS:

- In 2023, B.C. experienced a significant increase in hate crimes, with the overall number of incidents rising to 4,777 nationwide, a 32% increase from 2022. B.C. continues to show notable rises when adjusted for population size. (Statistics Canada)
- In 2023, national police data showed a 32% increase in reported hate crimes from 2022 and a 72% rise in the two-year period from 2019 to 2021. (Statistics Canada)
- In March 2023, the BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner’s (BCOHRC) report “From Hate to Hope” noted over half of respondents (56%) felt the increase in hate incidents was due to a normalization of hate incidents online and elsewhere.

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- The BCOHRC's report identified that respondents were most likely to report that the hate incident was motivated by race, ethnicity or ancestry (60%), followed by political beliefs (20%), religious or spiritual beliefs (19%) or cultural markers or traditions (19%).

BACKGROUND:

- The Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network was announced during Multiculturalism Week on November 20, 2019, as the successor to the Organizing Against Racism and Hate (OARH) program that ran for ten years (2009-2019).
- The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS) was renewed to continue delivering services for the fourth year as the hub for the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network.
- Thirty-five organizations have delivered spoke services in 40 communities in rural and urban communities across the province since August 2020.
- In May 2021, the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network launched a new website with resources, multilingual information for victims and witnesses of hate incidents, and videos available in 13 languages, including Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog, Punjabi and Hindi. The videos were made in collaboration with the Vancouver Asian Film Festival (VAFF).

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2025/26 ESTIMATES NOTE

Last updated: March 04, 2025.

Sons of Freedom Doukhobor Apology and Recognition

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

- The Sons of Freedom Doukhobor, were systematically targeted by the B.C. government in the early 1900s through government policies that changed their community and continue to impact them to this day.
- In 2019, the Province consulted with the Doukhobor community to assess the impact of those actions and develop appropriate government responses.
- In February 2024, on behalf of the Province, the Attorney General extended a heartfelt apology and acknowledgement to the Sons of Freedom Doukhobor community for their suffering.
- On February 27, 2024, the Premier formally delivered the apology in the Legislative Assembly.
- Government is providing a series of initiatives aimed at addressing the impacts of past wrongs and ensuring such injustices are not repeated in the province. These initiatives include:
 - The Sons of Freedom Doukhobor Legacy Fund,
 - Research and Archival Services, and
 - A Health and Wellness Fund.

FINANCES:

- Budget 2025 does not provide any funding for this initiative.

STATISTICS:

- In 1899, approximately 7,500 Doukhobors sought refuge in Canada, fleeing persecution in Russia due to their non-conformist religious beliefs and communal lifestyle.
- In the early 1900s, approximately 600 Sons of Freedom members were convicted of public nudity and sentenced to three years on Piers Island, off Vancouver Island.
- By September 1953, authorities arrested 148 Sons of Freedom Doukhobor adults for nudity and placed their 104 children in New Denver, a former sanatorium and internment camp.

BACKGROUND:

- Between 1953 and 1959, the Sons of Freedom Doukhobor community faced grave injustices, including the forced removal of children from their homes to the New Denver institution.
- This removal caused enduring trauma and integration difficulties for survivors and their descendants.

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- Since the 1990s, the community has sought provincial acknowledgment of these historical injustices and assistance with recovery and enhancing their quality of life.
- In April 1999, the Ombudsperson's *Public Report No. 38*, emphasized that these children were innocent victims caught in complex conflicts, provided five recommendations for government to address:
 - Acknowledge government wrongdoing;
 - Provide a comprehensive explanation for why these children were apprehended;
 - Issue a clear and unconditional public apology in the Legislative Assembly and state the government's commitment to redress the damage caused;
 - Engage consultations with the affected individuals to determine the appropriate form of compensation and support; and
 - A thorough examination of the RCMP's role and recommend appropriate actions.
- In March 2002, the Ombudsperson produced *Public Report No. 43*, indicating only one recommendation was addressed, and four partially implemented or unaddressed.
- In October 2004, the then Attorney General expressed regret in the legislative assembly.
- On February 1 and 2, 2024, the AG together with Minister Katrine Conroy and MLAs Brittny Anderson and Roly Russell formally apologized to the Sons of Freedom Doukhobor communities in Castlegar and Grand Forks.
- The following initiatives have been developed as part of the \$10M Apology and Recognition Initiative:
 - Sons of Freedom Doukhobor Legacy Fund (\$5M): A fund to foster healing and recovery among the Doukhobor community and promote reconciliation between Doukhobor groups, their families, and neighbours.
 - Research and Archival Services (\$1.25M): Initiatives to support community-based research, raise awareness, and document and archive the history of the Doukhobors in B.C.
 - Health and Wellness Fund (\$3.75M): A program aimed at promoting intergenerational wellness and enhancing the overall well-being and quality of life of Doukhobor survivors and their families.
- Selkirk College's Mir Centre for Peace will manage and administer the funds with the Sons of Freedom Doukhobor community.
- The Distribution of Funds is a 2-phase approach:
 - Phase 1 took place in August 2024, and recognition funds were provided to 93 living survivors.
 - Phase 2 will take place in spring/Summer 2025, allowing Perry Siding Children and all descendants to have access to the Health and Wellbeing Fund.

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