

Ministry of Citizens' Services Fiscal 2024/25 Estimates Briefing

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2024/25 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Budget Overview

Revised: Date of last revision, February 8, 2024

Key Messages

- The Ministry of Citizens' Services 2024/25 net operating budget has been tabled at \$705.277 million, which represents an increase of \$22.507 million, or 3.3%, compared to the 2023/24 restated net budget of \$682.770 million.
- The Ministry's capital budget for 2024/25 is \$392.055 million, which is a net decrease of \$32.967 million, or a decrease of 7.8%, compared to the 2023/24 budget of \$425.022 million.

Questions and Answers:

OPERATING FUNDING

1) How much did your Ministry's operating budget change this year and why?

Answer: My Ministry's operating budget increased by \$22.507 million or 3.3% this year, primarily due to:

- Budget 2024 Increase of \$6.064 million to support salaries and benefits increases stemming from the Shared Recovery Mandate (BCGEU Collective Agreement and Excluded Management Compensation).
- Budget 2023 Increase of \$3.250 million to support salaries and benefits increases stemming from the Shared Recovery Mandate

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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(BCGEU Collective Agreement and Excluded Management Compensation).

- Increase of \$13.087 million to support implementation of the Nanaimo Correctional Centre.
- Decrease of \$120 thousand for facility support associated with BC's Housing Strategy (Ministry of Attorney General).
- Increase of \$371 thousand for IT Access Security
- Increase of \$96 thousand for Cloud IT Security
- Decrease of \$175 thousand for Clean BC – Education Awareness
- Decrease of \$59 thousand for Clean BC – Govt Fleet Program
- Decrease of \$7 thousand for a Minister's Office minor adjustment

CAPITAL FUNDING

2) How much did your Ministry's capital budget change this year and why?

Answer: The Ministry's capital budget decreased by \$32.967 million, a decrease of 7.8% this year.

Changes are primarily due to staging and timing of multi-year projects.

Main increases in the plan include:

- Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information
- Tenant Improvements for buildings purchased under Strategic Acquisitions \$8.274 million
- Port Coquitlam Law Courts Renovation \$2.389 million
- BC Data Systems \$0.600 million

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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- Vehicles Fleet Replacement \$0.343m

These are offset by decreases to the plan, including:

- Nanaimo Correctional Centre (\$52.977m)
- Energy Smart Program (\$8.213m)
- Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information
-
-
- Courthouse Improvements (\$1.887m)
- Kamloops Option to Purchase (land/buildings) (\$1.550m)
- Vancouver Law Courts Renovation (\$1.219m)
- Office Furniture (\$0.924m)
- EV Charging Stations (\$0.484m)
- MCFD Multi-Year Action Plan (MYAP) – Duncan (\$0.458m)
- SDPR Risk Review related TI's (\$0.328m)
- Various Routine Capital projects that completed in FY24 (\$13.641m)
- Workstation Refresh (\$5.200m)
- Strategic Transformation & Mainframe Services (\$2.308m)
- Warehouse Safety & Optimization (\$0.350m)

Contact:

Holly Cairns

Assistant Deputy
Minister/Executive
Financial Officer

Corporate Services
Division

Government Financial Information

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Appendix

Table 1: Budget 2024 Operating Budget Changes Per Core Business Area (CITZ)

Ministry of Citizens' Services 2024/25 Explanation of Changes in Estimates (Core Business) (\$ in Millions)				
Core Business	Estimates 23/24 Restated	Estimates 24/25	Variance	Explanation of Changes
Services to Citizens and Businesses	\$34.776	\$36.604	\$1.828	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$1.2m and Budget 2023 \$0.6m)
Office of the Chief Information Officer	\$2.023	\$2.288	\$0.265	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$0.2m and Budget 2023 \$0.1m)
BC Data Service	\$28.753	\$29.757	\$1.004	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$0.6m and Budget 2023 \$0.4m)
Connectivity	\$23.981	\$24.167	\$0.186	Budget increase due to and BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ \$0.2m, partially. (Budget 2024 \$0.1m and Budget 2023 \$0.1m)
Procurement and Supply Services	\$10.324	\$11.648	\$1.324	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$0.8m and Budget 2023 \$0.5m)
Real Property	\$364.897	\$378.711	\$13.814	Budget increases primarily due to \$12.7m for Nanaimo Correctional Centre, and for BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$0.9m and Budget 2023 \$0.4m), partly offset by Budget 2023 AG housing strategy reduction for \$0.1m
Enterprise Services	\$173.878	\$176.294	\$2.416	Budget increases is primarily due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$0.9m and Budget 2023 \$0.6m) and increase in Information Systems (\$0.4m related to Nanaimo Correctional Centre, \$0.4m Access Security and \$0.1m Cloud IT Security)

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Ministry of Citizens' Services 2024/25 Explanation of Changes in Estimates (Core Business) (\$ in Millions)				
Core Business	Estimates 23/24 Restated	Estimates 24/25	Variance	Explanation of Changes
Corporate Information Records Management Office	\$24.644	\$25.638	\$0.994	Budget increase is primarily due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$0.6m and Budget 2023 \$0.4m)
Government Digital Experience	\$9.484	\$9.755	\$0.271	Budget increase is primarily due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$0.3m and Budget 2023 \$0.2m), partially offset by reduction in Clean BC – Education Awareness for \$0.2m
Minister's Office	\$0.710	\$0.703	(\$0.007)	Budget decrease due to lower supplementary salary cost
Corporate Services	\$9.300	\$9.712	\$0.412	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$0.3m and Budget 2023 \$0.1m)
CITZ Total	\$682.770	\$705.277	\$22.507	

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Table 2: Budget 2024 Operating Budget Changes Per Expenditure Category (CITZ)

Ministry of Citizens' Services					
24/25 Explanation of Changes in Estimates (Group Account Classification (GAC) Level)					
(\$ in Millions)					
Expenditure Category	STOB	Estimates 23/24 Restated	Estimates 24/25	Variance	Explanation of Changes
Base Pay & Overtime	50	\$159.401	\$167.157	\$7.756	Budget increases primarily due to Shared Recovery Mandate for BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$4.8m and Budget 2023 \$2.7m)
Supplemental Salaries	51	\$1.208	\$1.201	(\$0.007)	Budget decrease due to lower supplementary salary cost in Minister's Office
Employee Benefits	52	\$41.038	\$43.004	\$1.966	Budget increases primarily due to Shared Recovery Mandate for BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases ¹ (Budget 2024 \$1.2m and Budget 2023 \$0.6m)
Legislative Salaries	54	\$0.058	\$0.058	-	
Salary & Benefits Sub-Total		\$201.705	\$211.422	\$9.717	
Operating Costs	55 - 75	\$722.963	\$731.500	\$8.537	Budget increases primarily due to Nanaimo Correctional Centre cost for \$11.3m related to incremental operations and maintenance, move/manage/start-up costs, site remediation, and amortization costs partly offset by recoveries adjustment.
Government Transfers	77 - 80	\$20.000	\$20.000	-	
Other Expenses	84 - 85	\$122.716	\$124.548	\$1.832	Budget increases primarily due to incremental property taxes related to Nanaimo Correctional Centre.
Gross Expenditure Total		\$1,067.384	\$1,087.470	\$20.086	
Internal Recoveries	88	(\$186.514)	(\$186.514)	-	
External Recoveries	89 - 90	(\$198.100)	(\$195.679)	\$2.421	Lower recoveries due to fiscal neutral adjustments
Recoveries Total		(\$384.614)	(\$382.193)	\$2.421	
CITZ Net Expenditure Total		\$682.770	\$705.277	\$22.507	

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Table 3: Budget 2024 Capital Budget Changes (CITZ)

CITZ 10-YEAR CAPITAL PLAN - BUDGET 2024 (ESTIMATES)

(\$ millions)	23/24 Budget	24/25 Budget	Change
Real Property			
Nanaimo Correctional Centre Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information	\$60.940	\$7.963	(\$52.977)
Strategic Acquisition of Buildings	\$8.007	\$8.007	\$0.000
TIs for buildings purchased under Strategic Acquisitions	\$7.924	\$16.198	\$8.274
Energy Smart Program	\$15.528	\$7.315	(\$8.213)
EV Charging Stations	\$0.484	\$0.000	(\$0.484)
Courthouse Improvements	\$13.864	\$11.977	(\$1.887)
Vancouver Law Courts Inn Renovation	\$12.560	\$11.341	(\$1.219)
Port Coquitlam Law Courts Renovation Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information	\$19.528	\$21.917	\$2.389
MCFD Multi-Year Action Plan (MYAP) - Duncan	\$0.458	\$0.000	(\$0.458)
SDPR Risk Review related TI's	\$5.587	\$5.259	(\$0.328)
Camosun Lab Relocation	\$0.000	\$0.000	\$0.000
PSSG Land Acquisition	\$0.681	\$0.701	\$0.020
Kamloops Option to Purchase Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information	\$1.550	\$0.000	(\$1.550)
Office Furniture	\$1.500	\$0.576	(\$0.924)
Routine Capital Envelope	\$80.346	\$66.705	(\$13.641)
Subtotal	\$259.610	\$233.595	(\$26.015)
Digital Platforms and Data			
Transformation & Technology Funding	\$110.000	\$110.000	\$0.000
Other IM/IT Funding	\$0.000	\$0.600	\$0.600
Subtotal	\$110.000	\$110.600	\$0.600

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

(\$ millions)	23/24 Budget	24/25 Budget	Change
OCIO ENTERPRISE SERVICES			
Workstation Refresh	\$29.472	\$24.272	(\$5.200)
Strategic Transformation & Mainframe Services	\$15.240	\$12.932	(\$2.308)
Maintenance and Rehabilitation	\$9.737	\$9.700	(\$0.037)
Subtotal	\$54.449	\$46.904	(\$7.545)
PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY SERVICES			
Special Equipment	\$0.753	\$0.403	(\$0.350)
Subtotal	\$0.753	\$0.403	(\$0.350)
MINISTRY OPERATIONS			
Office Equipment	\$0.010	\$0.010	\$0.000
Vehicles	\$0.200	\$0.543	\$0.343
Subtotal	\$0.210	\$0.553	\$0.343
CITZ TOTAL ESTIMATES CAPITAL BUDGET	\$425.022	\$392.055	(\$32.967)

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Minister's Office Budget

Revised: Date of last revision, February 21, 2024

Key Messages:

- The operating budget for my office is \$703,000 for 2024/25, which is a decrease of \$7,000 from last year's budget of \$710,000.
- The budget for my office operations decreased by \$7,000 in supplemental salary costs for support staff (received in Budget 2022).

Questions and Answers:

1. What are the types of costs paid for out of the Minister's Office budget, and are there any costs funded from other sources?
 - Salaries and benefits for my staff, travel, IT costs, and general office and business expenses are all funded from my office budget.
 - My annual basic compensation as a Member of the Legislative Assembly under the Member's Remuneration and Pensions Act is paid for through the Legislative Assembly (\$115,046 annually), while my additional compensation as a Cabinet Minister is funded from my Office budget (\$57,523).

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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- Pursuant to the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act (BBMAA) 10 per cent of my compensation ($\$57,523 \times 10\% = \$5,752$) as a Cabinet Minister is held back until individual responsibilities are met.
- Additionally, Capital City Allowance for meals, travel, and certain eligible living expenses is funded by the Ministry of Finance.

2. What is the largest cost annually within your office budget?

- Salaries and benefits of my staff is the single largest annual cost; in 2024/25 the budget for this is \$551,000.
- Travel, general office expenses, IT related costs and tech support for my staff and I are the other types of costs covered within my budget (see table below for budget detail).

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Ministry of Citizens' Services

	Fiscal 2023/24 Estimates	Fiscal 2024/25 Estimates	Change from FY24 to FY25
Base Salaries & OT	439,000	439,000	0
Supplemental Salaries	7,000	0	(7,000)
Employee Benefits	136,000	136,000	0
Legislative Salaries	58,000	58,000	0
Salaries & Benefits Sub Total	640,000	633,000	(7,000)
Public Servant Travel	38,000	38,000	0
Information Systems	10,000	10,000	0
Office & Business Expenses	20,000	20,000	0
Amortization Expense	2,000	2,000	0
Operating Expenses Sub Total	70,000	70,000	0
Other Expenses	0	0	0
Other Expenses Sub Total	0	0	0
NET TOTAL	\$710,000	\$703,000	(\$7,000)

Average FTEs

5.0

Contact:

Holly Cairns

Assistant Deputy
Minister and
Executive
Financial Officer

Corporate
Services Division

Government Financial
Information

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Budget Tracking (\$ millions)

Revised: Date of last revision, February 8, 2024

Questions and Answers:

How did the Ministry's Estimates Budget change year over year?

- Please see the details below.

	(\$ millions)
2023/24 Estimates (no restatements)	\$682.770
<i>Budget 2022 Decisions</i> (impacting Budget 2024)	
• Increase to Access Security	\$0.371
• Increase to Cloud IT Security	\$0.096
• Decrease to Clean BC - Education & Awareness	(\$0.175)
• Decrease to Clean BC - Govt Fleet Program	(\$0.059)
<i>Budget 2023 Decisions</i> (impacting Budget 2024)	
• Increase to support salaries and benefits lifts stemming from the Shared Recovery Mandate (19th BCGEU Collective Agreement) and excluded management.	\$3.250
• Decrease to AG Housing Strategy	(\$0.120)
• Minister's Office Adjustment	(\$0.007)
<i>Budget 2024 Decisions</i>	
• Increase to support Nanaimo Correctional Centre	\$13.087
• Increase to support salaries and benefits lifts stemming from the Shared Recovery Mandate (19th BCGEU Collective Agreement) and excluded management.	\$6.064
Total Net Adjustments	<hr/> \$22.507 <hr/>
2024/25 Estimates	<hr/> \$705.277 <hr/>

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Contact:

Holly Cairns

Assistant Deputy Minister/Executive
Financial Officer
Corporate Services
Division

Government Financial
Information

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Minister's Mandate Letter Achievements

Revised: Date of last revision, February 28, 2024

Over the last six years, the ministry has undertaken key activities in alignment with government's priorities, including the foundational principles and identified action items in the February 2020, November 2020, and December 2022 Minister's mandate letters.

Below is a summary of the status updates for the December 2022 Mandate Letter.

Minister's Mandate Letter (December 2022)

Mandate Letter Item	Status	Milestones
Continue to expand the use of cross-government data to increase evidence-based decision making and better inform policy and programs for our key priorities, building on government's Data Innovation Program. (BCDS)	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 50 core data sets available for population-level analysis in the Data Innovation Program. • Data available to government and academic researchers; working on an approach to enabling broader public sector, First Nations, Indigenous organizations, and non-profits to use the program. • Major projects have supported greater evidence for decisions related to youth mental health, basic income, and homelessness.
Work with partners and the public to modernize government services	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Digital Plan was published in Spring 2023, in partnership with ministries, and lays out

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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<p>and leverage best-in-class digital tools that enhance cross-sector coordination, and provide services that are efficient, equitable, and prioritize user experience. (GDX, OCIO-ICT, OCIO-ES, OCIO-CIRMO, DO, SBC)</p>	<p>government's strategic direction to continue to leverage technology to improve programs and services and provide supports for a digitally equipped BC Public Service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering best-in-class application hosting services in government data centres that allow ministries to quickly create, modernize and continuously improve services. • These approaches are also now embedded as Digital Principles in Core Policy. • In addition, published the draft Digital Code of Practice for consultation with the public sector and B.C. tech sector, which will provide in depth guidance for public servants on implementing the Digital Principles in order to provide services that are efficient, equitable, accessible and prioritize user experience. • Reduced time to procure a digital team to modernize or deliver new services to 20 days. • To date, ministries have procured 209 opportunities valued at \$54M through the Digital Marketplace. • Adoption of Digital Marketplace
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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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		<p>services has grown with a projected 117% increase in contract dollar value this fiscal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A new procurement service, Team With Us, launched July 2023 to support access to individual digital talent. Ten opportunities have been awarded, five to small business, valued at \$2.6 million.• Providing best-in-class digital components that enable rapid response to emergent service needs, like pandemic response, health care services and disaster relief.• Developing a program to support expansion of the use of time-saving components across government.• Supported ministries' service modernization initiatives through investments in the IM/IT Minor Capital Envelope. In 2023/24, the IM/IT Minor Capital budget stands at \$110M and is supporting 109 digital projects from across government.• In partnership with Municipal Affairs, Service BC and ICBC, new web information for newcomers to B.C. went live on January 31, 2024.
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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

		<p>This information was based on an identified need by users, newcomers and partner groups accessed through service design and user research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In partnership with Ministry of Housing and people who use the service, a complete redesign and rewrite of more than 100 pages of web content related to residential tenancy to ensure it was more accessible and equitable.• Continue delivering government's public engagements and supporting ministries with a focus on improving and testing digital tools.• The FOI Modernization project is a multiyear initiative to improve FOI timeliness, service delivery, and modernize technology. Ministries that piloted the new system decreased the average days to complete an FOI request by almost 7 days. All ministries are now using the new system.• The FOI Modernization project is a multiyear initiative to improve FOI timeliness, service delivery, and modernize technology. All
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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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		<p>ministries have now been onboarded to the new FOI system. A pilot of the new system in 2022 with five participating ministries delivered time saving results. The average days to complete an FOI request decreased by almost 7 days and on-time compliance increased by 16%. Since then, additional time-saving features have been added, such as new redaction software, saving over 50 minutes per general request. All ministries are now using the new system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed a request for proposals (RFP) to establish a digital archives and developed a prototype to transfer records into the digital archives.• Progress was made on establishing digital archives by completing a Request for Information on digital archiving solutions, a jurisdictional scan of policy, systems, and best practices, and posting a Request for Proposals to procure a digital archiving system.
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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance equity of access to digital government services using the BC Services Card online, the BC Token was launched for people who do not have access to a smart phone or tablet. • People with Canadian government-issued identity documents can now set up the BC Services Card app to access government services online. People who will benefit from this include those who are not eligible for the BC Medical Services Plan (MSP) but wish to access B.C. government services online, such as medical professionals from other provinces, B.C. students studying out of province, military members, new arrivals to B.C., and some federal employees.
<p>Continue to improve how procurement processes deliver benefits for people and businesses in communities across the province. (PSD, DO)</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Released updated Procurement Plan in February 2024. • Launched the new BC Bid system in May 2022. <p>The External Advisory Committee on Indigenous Procurement Initiative (EAC) held its inaugural meeting in November 2022 and released a progress update in</p>

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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		<p>early 2024. The committee meets on an ongoing basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EAC will make recommendations and advise the Province on the preparation of a plan to increase Indigenous Peoples' participation in the Province's procurement opportunities. • Developed and launched third Digital Marketplace procurement service: Team With Us. Creates ability for individual IMIT professionals to rapidly partner with government technical teams to modernize services. Ten contracts awarded, five to small business, valued at \$2.6m.
<p>With support from the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives, continue work to help dismantle systemic racism and improve access to government programs and services for Indigenous, Black, and other people of colour by implementing the <i>Anti-Racism Data Act</i>.</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee (the Committee) to establish anti-racism research priorities that will help identify and eliminate systemic racism and improve access to government programs and services. Anti-racism research priorities were released by government in May 2023. • CITZ worked with Indigenous Peoples and the Committee before fielding the BC Demographic

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<p>(BCDS)</p>		<p>Survey, a voluntary population survey which collected demographic information from people living in B.C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This data is being used alongside existing program data in the Data Innovation Program to identify and dismantle systemic racism. • Research on some of the anti-racism research priorities has begun.
<p>Begin the work to address barriers to effective use of data in delivering services to British Columbians more efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>(BCDS)</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Released B.C.'s first Provincial Data Plan that maps an all-of-government approach for data to support government in meeting its objectives to advance equity, support reconciliation, increase evidence-based decision making, deliver the modern services people need and strengthen our data competency and governance. • Delivered B.C.'s first all-of-government Data Management Policy which provides direction on how to manage data consistently and ethically in a strategic and user-focused way. • Continuously improving the BC Data Catalogue to ensure visibility into what high-value data is held

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		<p>by government and can be shared/leveraged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed the Gender and Sex Data Standard to guide collection of this data in a consistent and accurate way to inform policy and program decisions to represent our gender-diverse population.• Developed Metadata Standards to guide ministries in cataloging their data in a consistent way and to make data more interoperable when sharing.
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Contact:

Holly Cairns Assistant Deputy Corporate Services 778 698-0400
Minister Division

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Minister's Mandate Letter Achievements

Revised: Date of last revision, February 22, 2024

Over the last six years, the ministry has undertaken key activities in alignment with government's priorities, including the foundational principles and identified action items in the February 2020, November 2020, and December 2022 Minister's mandate letters.

Below is a summary of the status updates for the November 2020 Mandate Letter.

Minister's Mandate Letter (November 2020)

Mandate Letter Item	Status	• Milestones
Work to ensure government services remain responsive through the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery. (All Divisions)	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supported digital proof of vaccinations via Health Gateway and mobile BC Services Card.• Delivered information in-person, online via 12 languages, by phone in 140+ languages.• Upgraded government networks and provided technical support to meet the needs of a remote workforce.• Introduced a temporary Ministerial Order under FOIPPA to modify data residency requirements and enable the broader use of communications tools for health-care workers and other public-sector staff. FOIPPA amendments

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		<p>in 2021 included updates to the data residency rules to enshrine this into law.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part the COVID-19 Supply Hub, led the sourcing, warehousing and distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies for sale to non- health sectors. • Based off our work on the COVID-19 Supply Hub, which closed as of September 30, 2021, provided technical and logistical support to the Ministry of Health to ensure health-care providers have the PPE they require to maintain operations. • Continue to ensure there is plain-language, easy to find, translated information about COVID-19 and vaccination on gov.bc.ca. • 2022: Transitioned Health Gateway onto Application Programming Interface (API)Gateway to enable efficient ongoing API • Management and substantial cost savings for HLTH.
Lead work to deliver high- speed connectivity throughout the	In Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ministry signed an \$830M joint funding MOU with the federal government in March 2022 to

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<p>province until all regions are connected to the high- speed network. (CONN)</p>		<p>establish the Connecting Communities BC program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application intakes were held in Sept. 2022, summer 2023, and Jan. 2024. • To date, 208 projects have been approved and 113 have been completed since 2017 that are expected to benefit more than 95,000 homes. • Cellular funding has approved projects that, when completed with expand cellular services along more than 530 kms.
<p>Continue to expand the use of cross-government data to increase evidence-based decision making and better inform public policy and assume responsibility for BC Stats. (BCDS)</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2023, released the Provincial Data Plan that supports the Data Innovation Program and expanded the program to academic researchers.
<p>Support innovation, including in the B.C. tech sector, through open data initiatives. (BCDS)</p>	<p>Substantially completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In fall 2021 the ministry released a new BC Data Catalogue that ensures people, non-profits and businesses have greater access to data. • B.C. has 3,200 discoverable data sets that are available to the public with an additional 200 datasets

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		<p>available to government users only.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with local tech companies to launch a community information tool in Spring 2021 that showcases investment opportunities across the province. The Community Information Tool (CIT) compiles over 40 data sets offering insights into regions across B.C. with integrated socio-economic, connectivity and community assets data. This interactive tool supports community, regional and province-wide planning, which is essential to building thriving communities.
<p>Continue to improve government's public sector data security and privacy practices to ensure that British Columbians' personal information is safeguarded. (OCIO-CIRMO, OCIO-ES)</p>	<p>Substantially completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients were introduced to the ministry's next-generation big data security analytics platform. • Onboarded 110+ public sector organizations to external security services as of December 2020. • Completed findings from 2019 Internal Directory and 2020 IT Asset Management Audits. • Consulted with ministry Privacy Officers and privacy stakeholders across government on the Privacy Impact Assessment process and

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		<p>identified areas for improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amended FOIPPA in November 2021 to enhance public sector privacy provisions including mandatory breach notification and privacy management programs for all public sector bodies covered by FOIPP (came into force February 2023).
<p>Continue to provide British Columbians with timely access to information and ensure the system provides public accountability. (OCIO-CIRMO)</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For over 90% of requests, the average processing time continued to drop to 38 days. Changes made to the FOI system reduced the FOI request backlog by 38%, with a priority being given to the oldest files and requests from individuals seeking personal information. Modernized FOI legislation in fall 2021, system, services, and strengthening privacy protections.
<p>Improve access to information rules to provide greater public accountability. (OCIO-CIRMO)</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry continued to facilitate efficient request processing through standardized practices, streamlined business processes, and continuous improvement methods. The FOI Modernization Project will improve business processes across

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		<p>government ministries and build a new software system to increase efficiencies when responding to the thousands of FOI requests annually.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thirteen categories of proactively disclosed records were available to the public by December 2020. Examples of categories include Ministers' and Corporate Transition Binders as well as Estimates Notes.• Since then, two more categories have been added: Summaries of Ministerial Briefing Notes, was announced by the end of FY 21/22 and Parliamentary Secretaries' Calendars announced end of FY 22/23 bringing the total to 15 proactive disclosure categories.• Ministries disclosed a great deal of information through online repositories and interactive tools such as the BC Data Catalogue, DriveBC, and the BC Economic Atlas. There are more than 3,000 data sets on the BC Data Catalogue, which increases transparency relating to government services.
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<p>Support the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Anti-Racism Initiatives in the collection, housing and analysis of race-based data which will be essential to modernizing sectors like policing, health care and education. (BCDS)</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CITZ worked with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee to establish anti-racism research priorities that will help identify and eliminate systemic racism and improve access to government programs and services. Anti-racism research priorities were released by government in May 2023. • CITZ worked with Indigenous Peoples and the committee before fielding the BC Demographic Survey, a voluntary population survey which collected demographic information from people living in BC. • This demographic data will be used alongside existing program data in the Data Innovation Program to identify and dismantle systemic racism. • Research on some of the anti-racism research priorities has begun. • Supported the Attorney General and the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Anti-Racism Initiatives in developing and passing the <i>Anti-Racism Data Act</i> in June 2022.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Established the Anti-Racism Data Committee in September 2022 to collaborate with government and ensure that the implementation of the <i>Anti-Racism Data Act</i> is informed by the expertise and lived experience of racialized people, including Indigenous Peoples.
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Contact:

Holly Cairns

Assistant Deputy
Minister

Corporate Services
Division

778 698-0400

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Minister's Mandate Letter Achievements

Revised: Date of last revision, February 22, 2024

Over the last six years, the ministry has undertaken key activities in alignment with government's priorities, including the foundational principles and identified action items in the February 2020, November 2020, and December 2022 Minister's mandate letters.

Below is a summary of the status updates for the February 2020 Mandate Letter.

Minister's Mandate Letter (February 2020)

Mandate Letter Item	Status	Milestones
Continue to expand connectivity to communities throughout the province to support new economic opportunities and improved access to government services. (CONN)	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry has signed an \$830M joint funding MoU with Canada in March 2022 to establish the Connecting Communities BC program, administered by the ministry. Intakes opened Sept 2022, Summer 2023, and Jan. 2024. To date, 208 projects have been approved and 113 have been completed since 2027 and are expected to benefit over 95,000 homes. Approved cellular projects since 2017 will bring cellular services to more than 530 kms.
Build on the success of government's new	Substantially completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry published the B.C. Procurement Plan in early 2024

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<p>procurement processes to ensure that more local, small, and medium- sized companies can do business with government more efficiently while ensuring public funds are spent wisely. (PSD)</p>		<p>outlining the work government has been doing in collaboration with businesses and communities, as well as Indigenous peoples, to modernize its procurement system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We launched Discovery Days to create a new, collaborative way for vendors to engage with the B.C. Government. • The External Advisory Committee on Indigenous Procurement Initiative had its inaugural meeting in November 2022.
<p>Continue to improve government's public sector data security and privacy practices to ensure that British Columbians personal information is safeguarded. (OCIO-CIRMO, OCIO-ES)</p>	<p>Substantially completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>Information Management Act</i> was amended to formalize the obligation for all government employees to document their decisions. • Mandatory information management training was updated to provide public service employees with essential learning and resources. The update introduced new content on the requirement to document government decisions, an expanded information security section, refreshed information management content, an updated look and feel, and a more

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		<p>interactive user experience. Public servants are required to take the training once every two years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry completed an Information Management practice review to assess ministry practices in relation to legislation and policy requirements.
<p>Work with your cabinet colleagues to ensure that public agencies gathering personal information or working with private service providers who gather public information on behalf of government employ the best possible security and privacy practices. (OCIO-CIRMO, OCIO-ES)</p>	<p>Substantially completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry Privacy Officers and privacy stakeholders across government were consulted on the Privacy Impact Assessment process and identified areas for improvement. The ministry conducted privacy training sessions to over 500 participants from government, the broader public sector, and the private sector. The ministry reviewed all contracts between government ministries and service providers that involve personal information, to ensure FOIPPA standards are upheld, and personal privacy is protected.
<p>Ensure that your ministry makes timely progress on the implementation of the <i>Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous</i></p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry continued to implement the <i>Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act</i> (Declaration Act), in all aspects of daily operations.

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<p><i>Peoples Act</i>, both in identifying priority legislative areas for inclusion in the action plan, and in ensuring that future ministry actions are consistent with the principles set out in the Act. (CONN, OCIO-CIRMO, BCDS, PSD)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIRR and CITZ are co-leading the Indigenous Procurement Initiative, actively undertaking engagement with Indigenous partners, organizations, businesses, and communities to gather experiences and recommendations to inform how best to increase Indigenous participation in government's procurement opportunities. • Established and committed to Declaration Act action 4.36, to ensure every First Nations community in B.C. has high-speed internet services by 2027. • Established and committed to Declaration Act action 3.14, to support the establishment of a First Nations-led and -mandated regional information governance centre. • Established and committed to DAAP action 3.15, to include Indigenous language in government systems and services. • May 2023, engaged with Indigenous community members to explore options for Indigenous language names on the B.C. birth certificates, including whether an
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		<p>interim dual language name birth certificate is a desired offering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2024, released the Indigenous Languages Technology Standard – the first in a series of technical standards to ensure our systems can support Indigenous languages. This is a vital step in reaching government's target of 2034 to update all systems. • March 2024, finalized approach to consultation and cooperation.
<p>Ensure that the process of vetting and awarding government IT contracts is conducted in a manner that saves money, increases innovation, improves competition, and helps our technology sector grow and ensure that government IT and software development procurement work better for companies that hire locally, operate sustainably, and have a local supply chain. (PSD)</p>	<p>Substantially completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ministry issued over 85 contracts to dozens of small to medium-sized tech companies through the new Sprint With Us and Code With Us programs, which are faster, easier and more transparent than traditional procurement processes. • The ministry began supporting the Province's COVID-19 Supply Hub with technology, procurement, and supply delivery to triage vendor offers related to personal protective equipment (PPE) and other vital supplies.

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<p>Work to maintain government's successful record of providing British Columbians with timely access to information and ensure the system provides public accountability. (OCIO-CIRMO)</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry facilitated efficient request processing through standardized practices, streamlined business processes and continuous-improvement methods.
<p>Improve access to information rules to provide greater public accountability. (OCIO-CIRMO)</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry amended FOI disclosure guidelines, after introducing a secure file transfer delivery system and implementing a BC Services Card verification process, to enable individuals seeking their own information from government to do so in a more secure and efficient manner. The ministry improved access to information by identifying additional types of government records that can be made available to people without a freedom of information request.

Contact:

Holly Cairns Assistant Deputy Corporate Services 778 698-0400
Minister

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2023/24 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: CITZ Reconciliation Summary

Revised: Date of last revision, February 21, 2024

Key Messages:

- **The Ministry is working to implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (November 2019), in all aspects of Ministry business.**

Declaration Act Action Plan

- The first Declaration Act Action Plan is the next step in enhancing government's relationship with Indigenous Peoples in B.C.
- Our goal is implementing the rights of Indigenous peoples into the very foundations of our province, through every ministry and in every aspect of society - from schools to the legal system, to children and families, to land stewardship and everything in between.
- Through this work we are building a province where Indigenous excellence, leadership, governance, and self-determination can be recognized and respected.
- British Columbia is the first province to release an action plan dedicated to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UN Declaration) in Canada.
- The plan was developed with Indigenous Peoples and organizations through intensive consultation. This significant engagement ensures the plan aligns and reflects the priorities of Indigenous Peoples – First Nations, Métis, and Inuit – living in B.C.

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- Together, we're working to make this province a place where First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have full enjoyment of their inherent rights and can pursue their dreams and raise their families without experiencing racism or discrimination.
- To build a better future, we must make the province a place where the human rights of Indigenous Peoples are respected, celebrated, and implemented.
- The work ahead of us won't be easy – but together, we can change the trajectory of history, and address the harms done by more than 150 years of colonialism.
- The plan outlines work each ministry in government is doing over five years to implement the UN Declaration between 2022 and 2027.
- Citizens' Services is the lead ministry on three of the actions:
 - o 3.14 Advance the collection and use of disaggregated demographic data, guided by a distinctions-based approach to Indigenous data sovereignty and self-determination, including supporting the establishment of a First Nations-governed and mandated regional data governance centre in alignment with the First Nations Data Governance Strategy.
 - CITZ is:
 - supporting the establishment of a First Nations-governed and mandated regional data governance centre in alignment with the First Nations Data Governance Strategy

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- working collaboratively with Indigenous partners by establishing an Indigenous data advisory group
- o 3.15 Adopt an inclusive digital font that allows for Indigenous languages to be included in communication, signage, services, and official records.
 - BC Sans is a new typeface for government. It was developed to create an Open Font Licence set of fonts for improved readability and delivery of our digital services, and contain support for multiple languages including Indigenous languages in B.C.
 - Supporting inclusion and reconciliation, this will remove technical barriers and make it easier for program areas across government to include Indigenous languages in communications, signage, services, and official records.
 - The font is available for download and has been deployed to all BC Public Service workstations and is the standard for provincial government websites and online public engagements.
 - Planning has focused on increasing awareness of the inclusive font within government and understanding the dependencies and challenges for program areas in its adoption.
- o 4.36 Ensure every First Nations community in B.C. has high-speed internet services.
 - Connectivity is essential to addressing the fundamental rights and needs of First Nations and

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communities.

- Quality, reliable and equitable high-speed internet, and telecommunications services are critical to advancing meaningful reconciliation, supporting Indigenous self-determination, and enabling sustainable, inclusive, and innovative Indigenous economies.
 - In 2022, the federal government announced a funding partnership that will support expansion of internet services to the remaining underserved First Nations reserves by 2027.
- The action plan does not include all initiatives to advance reconciliation in B.C. Actions proposed do not replace, limit, change or stop existing initiatives or related commitments. These efforts will continue alongside the development and implementation of the action plan.
 - Our Ministry has a table that will be overseeing implementation of the commitments and supporting the broader changes in culture and skills of our employees needed to make reconciliation efforts successful.

Indigenous Community Connectivity

- Bridging the digital divide is a critical part of British Columbia's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and our commitment to reconciliation and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

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- The Province's commitment to connect all First Nations communities to high-speed internet is outlined in action 4.36 of the Declaration Act Action Plan.
- Working together with First Nations, internet service providers and other organizations, we're seeing steady progress.
- In 2017, 66 per cent of households on First Nation reserves had access to high-speed internet services. That figure is now 80.3 per cent with an additional 11.4 per cent with projects in progress.
- With record investments we are making in connectivity, this number will continue to grow until all communities have access to high-speed internet.
- Internet connectivity is a key determinant of the social, cultural economic and overall wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. It improves access to education, health care services, economic development, and training opportunities.
- In addition to high-speed internet, the provincial and federal governments are supporting a Rogers Communications project to provide continuous cellular coverage between Prince Rupert and Smithers on Highway 16 – the Highway of Tears.
- This fulfils a critical recommendation from the Highway of Tears Symposium Report's 33 recommendations aimed at enhancing safety for Indigenous women and girls.
- Construction started on the cellular build at the end of 2021 and is due to complete later this year.

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Connected Coast

- Connected Coast is an innovative project that is designed to bring high-speed internet capacity to 139 B.C. rural and remote communities, including 48 Indigenous communities.
- The subsea fibre is laid along the ocean floor to key landing sites on land, bringing high-speed fibre to remote coastal communities.
- The project will serve communities along the B.C. coast from north of Prince Rupert, to Haida Gwaii, south to Vancouver, and around Vancouver Island.
- So far 69 landing sites have been built and over 1,100 km of submarine cable has been laid.
- The project is slated for completion in 2025.

Connecting Communities BC Program

- British Columbia is making significant investments toward our goal of connecting all rural and First Nation households to high-speed internet services by 2027.
- On March 8, 2022, the Governments of British Columbia and Canada announced an agreement to invest up to \$830 million (\$415 million each) to support expanding broadband infrastructure in the province to all under-served households.
- We're connecting communities because high-speed broadband transforms the way people live in rural and remote communities. It delivers the world to their doorstep through access to employment, education, vital services like healthcare and more.

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- Connecting Communities BC is the next generation of our provincial funding program for connectivity.
- There have been three application intakes so far for this and there will be more, until we reach our goal of connecting all corners of the province to high-speed internet services.
- The program funds applicants to build connectivity infrastructure, using multiple technologies – for example, fibre, cable, and fixed wireless.

Data Plan

- The Provincial Data Plan will help government have the right data at the right time to understand complex issues and make good decisions. The Plan has five pillars to:
 - Advance equity,
 - Support reconciliation,
 - Increase evidence-based decision making,
 - Deliver the modern services people need, and
 - Strengthen data competency and governance.
- Reliable, timely, quality data is needed to understand and identify workable solutions to big issues in B.C. like homelessness, systemic violence against women and girls, and the impact of climate change.

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- We need to use data to make good decisions, to ensure our services meet people's needs, and to drive equity and fairness in government programs.
- Under the Provincial Data Plan, we are setting a strong foundation for how data is managed and used, including much needed policy and guidance.
- Implemented in 2023, the Data Management Policy helps ministries manage their data consistently and ethically in a strategic and user-focused way.

Data standards

- Also implemented in 2023, the new Gender and Sex Data Standard improves how we collect and use data to create policies and programs to serve B.C.'s gender-diverse population.
- In early 2024, the Indigenous Languages Technology Standard will be implemented. It will ensure all future technology investments by government will support Indigenous language data to deliver more inclusive services to Indigenous people living in B.C.
- We also continue to support implementation of the *Anti-Racism Data Act*. We have worked with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee to establish research priorities which will give valuable insight into systemic racism, and from those insights improve government programs and services for all people in the province.
- We are creating a stronger B.C. by taking innovative approaches to how we use data as building blocks for modernizing government services.

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Anti-Racism Data Act Implementation

- 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 and other racialized people.
- 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 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, Black, and other racialized people.
- The legislation was informed by the thoughts of more than 13,000 British Columbians through engagement with Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities and the feedback continues to inform the implementation of the Act.
- It was one of the first pieces of legislation to be co-developed with Indigenous Peoples in accordance with *the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
- The implementation of the legislation is informed by the Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee.

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If asked about what action has been taken since the introduction of the Anti-Racism Data Act:

- We have established processes for ongoing consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples – working respectfully and closely on anti-racism data initiatives.
- The Anti-Racism Data Committee was established in September 2022 and held 6 meetings so far in 2023/2024. The Committee is made up of 11 members that represent a wide cross-section of racialized communities and geographic regions of B.C.
- Anti-Racism research priorities and process commitments related to how this research will be done were developed in collaboration with the Anti-Racism Data Committee and Indigenous Peoples and published in May 2023.
- The research priorities help ensure that the Province is focused on the areas that matter most to Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities.
- Work on some of the research priorities has begun.
- Through this research, we will gain valuable insight into systemic racism, and from those insights improve programs and services for all people in British Columbia.
- Indigenous partners are starting to work with us to co-develop a new, updated data standard respecting Indigenous identity.
- The updated standard is expected to be published in 2024 and will provide a consistent way of asking about Indigenous identity in a distinctions-based way.

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- This data standard is also responsive to a Research Priority set by Indigenous Peoples.
- As we begin working on research priorities, we are learning what data standards and directives are needed to do this work safely.
- As part of the groundwork for a future data directive and help mitigate harm, we have developed a mandatory 'Anti-racism in Research' training for researchers using the BC Demographic Survey data.
- Before June 1, 2024, we will provide our annual release of statistics and other information related to systemic racism and racial equity.
- In 2024 the release will include a summary report on the BC Demographic Survey, initial statistics related to some of the Research Priorities, and an update on the implementation of the *Anti-Racism Data Act*.

If asked about how we are consulting Indigenous communities:

- The *Anti-Racism Data Act* was developed with Indigenous Peoples and as we move forward, we will continue to work with Indigenous Peoples on all data initiatives developed under the Act.
- Research priorities were developed in partnership with Indigenous Peoples.
- We will continue to work in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples on the release of statistics and other information in 2024.
- The BC Data Service (BCDS) holds monthly meetings with Indigenous Peoples to discuss issues and opportunities related to

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Indigenous data governance and engage on the implementation of the Act.

- 6 meetings so far in 2023/2024.
- The BCDS is working with Indigenous Peoples on a data standard respecting Indigenous identity. The standard will provide a standardized way of asking about Indigenous identity.
- How we work with Indigenous Peoples is just as important as the work we do which is why the Ministry of Citizens' Services signed a Protocol with the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) establishing a practical commitment to the principles in the Declaration Act, Declaration Act Action Plan, and the Act.
- We are working closely with thought leaders from FNLC to support the creation of a First Nations Information Governance Centre. We are supporting this work under the Declaration Act Action plan and as one of the research priorities set by Indigenous Peoples.

Impact Procurement

- We created Impact Procurement to include government's values of anti-racism, equity, climate accountability, and meaningful reconciliation into the ways government does business with vendors.
- All government purchases have the potential for social, Indigenous, environmental, or economic impact. Considering these impacts are important steps towards a more sustainable and inclusive economy that will help build resilience and foster innovation.

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- The BC Impact Procurement project is a multi-year pilot project started in 2022 that will test a broadened scope of government's social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic impact purchasing guidelines.
- The pilot project is intended to help inform the policies, standards, and guidance necessary to use purchasing power to improve social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic outcomes for British Columbians.
- By leveraging procurement to realize the best value for taxpayers, we're working to support a resilient vendor marketplace in B.C. and increase business opportunities to benefit individuals, families, and communities across the province.

Indigenous Procurement Initiative

- Formed as part of B.C.'s Procurement Strategy in 2018, the Indigenous Procurement Initiative addresses the legacy of systemic exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from economic opportunities.
- In 2019, with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, we engaged Indigenous partners for their input on developing a cross-government approach to Indigenous procurement.
- The 2020 'Report on What We Heard' presented Indigenous experiences and provided recommendations to increase Indigenous Peoples' participation in government procurement opportunities.

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- In 2022, government created an External Advisory Committee with representation from First Nation, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities.
- In partnership with the Province, the Committee is co-developing a plan to:
 - Support government's commitment to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.
 - Implement a coordinated, cross-government approach to procurement with Indigenous Peoples.
- Create and refine procurement policies, practices, and programs that are supportive of Indigenous businesses, organizations, communities, and individuals so they can participate in government procurement opportunities.

Indigenous Language Names in Records, ID, Systems and Services

- We recognize that Indigenous people have the right to use names in their language. Part of reconciling the harms of colonization is making changes to respect this right.
- Action 3.15 of the Declaration Act Action Plan communicates our commitment to including Indigenous languages in government systems and services, like driver's licenses, school registration, and health records.
- In March 2023, the Ministry of Health began issuing birth certificates with Indigenous language names.

2023/24 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services

Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- This is an important first step, but we know we have a lot more to do.
- We know that accommodating an Indigenous name in one system but not the others risks cutting individuals off from crucial services. We must proceed carefully to ensure people's access to services is maintained.
- We are looking at an interim dual language approach which will work with systems that can accept Indigenous language characters, and systems that can't.
- This means we can make meaningful progress right away in the area we have heard from Indigenous people is most important: using people names in important services like name registration and school report cards, while accounting for dependencies on other systems and maintaining access to services.
- There are significant technical, policy and legislative changes needed, along with coordination of changes across government and with other jurisdictions as systems and services have critical dependencies. This is no small task and involves over 1,200 technology systems and programs in every ministry across government.
- As we are working on dual language identification like birth certificates, we are also beginning to ready our technology and services across government, guided by Indigenous peoples' priorities. This includes implementing a policy in January 2024 to ensure all future technology investments by government will support Indigenous languages.

2023/24 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services

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- Ongoing and continued consultation with Indigenous peoples is critical to guide this work, what is prioritized first, and what solutions are put in place. We need to make sure we move together and implement these changes in a way that reduces harms and doesn't inadvertently create new barriers.

Accessibility

- Real Property Division has developed a Social Stewardship Policy which articulates how social stewardship is reflected in real estate services through programs which support health and safety, accessibility, diversity and inclusion, and Indigenous reconciliation.
- RPD continues to grow Social Stewardship work in government buildings with the development of two new programs focusing on Indigenous Reconciliation and Diversity & Inclusion.

Contact:

Holly Cairns

Assistant Deputy
Minister

Corporate Services
Division

778 698-0400

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: CITZ Support for Response to Provincial Flooding and Forest Fires.

Revised: Date of last revision, February 26, 2024

Key Messages:

- Every year, my ministry plays a vital role in supporting the public and other ministries in response to natural disasters and emergencies, such as flooding events and wildfires.
- The 2023 wildfire season has been the most destructive in British Columbia's recorded history, resulting in more than 2.84 million hectares of forest and land burned; hundreds of homes and structures lost or damaged; and tens of thousands of people forced to evacuate.
- In addition to the 2023 wildfire season, in November 2021, B.C. experienced catastrophic flooding caused by heavy rains, resulting in severe floods and mudslides, which blocked every major highway connecting the Lower Mainland with the rest of the province.
- Immediately following an emergency, we assess potential impacts to service continuity by using the situational awareness details gathered by the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) and other partners, including other ministries, federal partners, and local governments.

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- In addition, we work with the ministries to ensure that appropriate Emergency Response Plans are in place, including conducting preventive maintenance to emergency equipment, to be ready for different scenarios.

Questions and Answers:

1) How can people expect to access information from the government in the event of an extreme weather event or other major emergency?

- Public-facing emergency response phone lines and web information are available during an emergency.
- For example, during the summer 2023 wildfires, we experienced a severe drought and destructive wildfires at the same time:
 - Service BC received over 2,800 calls and 7,000 text messages and made over 10,000 outbound calls to assist those who were heavily impacted.
 - The drought information, resources and response page was viewed 55,600 times.
 - The wildfire recovery resources page was viewed 14,800 times in a short period of time.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

2) What is the scope of translated web materials in the event of an extreme weather event or other major emergency? How do translation services play a role in supporting the people of British Columbia?

- The Service BC Provincial Contact Centre offers telephone support in 220 languages and emergency response related website content is translated into multiple languages as well.
- For example, during the drought and wildfires:
 - The Service BC Provincial Emergency Line offered support in 220 languages from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 - The drought page collated all relevant information for people including information about restrictions, conservation and rebate, temporary protection orders, supports available to farmers and communities in 5 languages (Traditional & Simplified Chinese, Punjabi, French and English).
 - The wildfire resources and supports page included information about emergency support services, financial support available, community resiliency centres, health resources, school closure information, camping and outdoor activities and contact information in 5 languages (Traditional & Simplified Chinese, Punjabi, French and English).

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

3) Are there plans to expand the temporary disaster (flood or wildfire response) web presence, contact centre, and in-person supports in future?

- Budget 2024 contains new funding that will broaden support for evacuees by funding specially-trained Service BC call centre agents who provide virtual navigation for accessing information and emergency services. Other new Service BC staff can be deployed directly to impacted communities to facilitate critical emergency services, such as emergency funding distribution and on-site replacement of official documents.
 - *Refer questions to EMCR as they hold the budget for this work*
- Service BC is actively working with EMCR to improve delivery of emergency support services, with a focus on the next wildfire season.
- Service BC continues to work with EMCR on mobile outreach programs to better serve communities during natural disasters and emergencies. In addition to community and mobile outreach, Service BC has 65 geographically dispersed service centres across the province, and the BC Services Card App to help expedite access to disaster funding for evacuees.
- The ministry continues to work with EMCR on several projects to expand and improve government's web presence in a disaster including rebuilding Emergency Info BC, improving the information on gov.bc.ca and building procedures across

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

government on how to manage web content during an emergency to ensure it is responsive. The ministry is also supporting several public engagements on behalf of EMCR and service design work that involves talking to people about their evacuation experience and evacuee supports.

- Citizen-facing emergency response phone lines and online information will always be available during an emergency. We assess the available supports and services, including any additional phone lines, web presence, and in-person supports that might be required.

4) Are there lessons learned or post-mortem planning around bringing ministries and partners together on this?

- My ministry is continuing to work with EMCR to discuss future web needs, which includes research to listen to people about their needs to help ensure government remains prepared to get people the information they need in a timely way during an emergency.
- As EMCR is responsible for this program, I will defer additional questions on this to them.

5) What actions are taken when a government building is compromised by an extreme weather event (i.e. flooding or wildfires) or other major emergency?

- Once an extreme weather event, such as flooding or wildfires starts, Real Property Division's service provider enacts their emergency response procedures, and the building is secured physically to prevent looting and theft.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- To prevent further damage, controlled shutdowns of the building systems may be initiated.
- For example, this process was followed when the atmospheric river event caused flooding in late 2021. As well, generators were used to restore critical power (laboratory, coolers, and freezers) and pumps were brought in to maintain and prevent extended flooding.

6) In 2023, how did the Ministry assist in the province's response to mass wildfires?

- The Office of the Chief Information Officer activated the Information Technology Operations Centre (ITOC), which coordinates and tracks all IT requests relating to emergency event response, such as wildfire or flooding and addresses IT and support requests from ministries 24/7.
 - Divisions with emergency response responsibilities were well integrated into the ITOC and ensured that any solutions and workarounds for impacted services were addressed at the highest priority.
- For example, in 2023 my ministry assisted EMCR and other response organizations to provide IT tools, network connectivity, and support services in response to multi-location Emergency Support Services' (ESS) and their evolving needs.

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- This included cellular and satellite Wi-Fi connectivity for front line service providers to tabletop device charging hubs and cables for people displaced and in need.

Contact:

Holly Cairns	Assistant Deputy Minister	Corporate Services Division	778 698-0400
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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Financial Data Integrity Audit

Revised: Date of last revision, January 22, 2024

Key Messages:

- While this review focused on other selected ministries, the recommendations have relevance across Government.
- I can confirm that adequate controls exist within my ministry to ensure financial data integrity.

Questions and Answers:

1) How does government ensure the integrity of financial data?

- Government's Core Policy and Procedures Manual provides policy and procedures for financial management. Government ensures financial data integrity by:
 - Aligning ministry financial policies and procedures with Core Policy, and ensuring staff are trained.
 - Financial Bulletins are regularly sent to ministry program areas, to assist with implementation of policies.
 - Ensuring systems and data entry controls are in place, including exercising expense authority before data entry.
 - Using post transaction data review and data reconciliations between systems and variance analysis to identify errors and anomalies.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services

Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- Each month, an internal review is carried out on a random selection of financial transactions. Additionally, follow-ups are done with program areas to explain the reasons behind any errors identified in an audit of Government's Core Policy and Procedures Manual and to outline the planned corrective action.

2) What are the areas of improvement that are required?

- While this review generally focused on the selected ministries, the recommendations have relevance across Government. This ministry has adequate controls to ensure financial data integrity. To further improve outcomes, the following actions will be maintained/implemented:
 - Ensuring timely updates of financial policy and procedures.
 - Cross training ministry staff on key financial management tasks to avoid knowledge loss during staff turnover.
 - Perform reconciliations of financial data transfer between data sources.
 - Developing a process to have regular communication and collaboration between finance and IT departments to address the potential financial impact of system changes.
 - Maintain and enhance our inventory of financial systems.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- Given that a Financial Risks and Controls Review may require a considerable amount of time to complete, additional tools and knowledge will be provided to ministry program areas.
- Note: The Ministries reviewed were: Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (now Forests); and Public Safety and Solicitor General.

3) When is government going to implement all of the improvements?

- While this review generally focused on the selected ministries, the recommendations have relevance across Government. As a result, Citizens' Services will be maintaining and improving its controls over the coming year in line with ministry priorities.

Contact: Holly Cairns Assistant Deputy Corporate Services Government Financial Information
Minister

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Facts and Figures - Connectivity

Revised: Date of last revision, February 08, 2024

Connectivity in BC

Status of connectivity as of January 2024

Status of broadband connectivity

- In March 2022 the B.C. and federal governments committed to invest up to \$830 million to support the expansion of high-speed internet services to all remaining rural and Indigenous households in B.C. by 2027.
- The B.C. government's goal is to provide all households with a minimum speed of 50/10 Megabits, the universal service objective set by the federal regulator, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.
- When this funding was announced, there were 115,000 under-served households in B.C.
- There are now approximately 86,900 under-served households.
- These figures mark important progress toward meeting the goal of connecting all households in B.C. to high-speed internet services.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- Figures below show the status of broadband connectivity and how the government is tracking towards 100 per cent of households served with high-speed internet services. Note: Figures below are based on analysis of data from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and the Connectivity Division.

	Total households in B.C.	Rural households (includes households on rural First Nations reserves)	Households on First Nation reserves
Total	2,211,694	348,241	39,577
# Served	2,124,831	266,269	31,797
% Served	96.1%	76.5%	80.3%
# Currently under-served	86,863	81,972	7,780
# In progress*	51,409	50,593	4,504
% In progress*	2.3%	14.5%	11.4%
# Remaining under-served when current projects complete**	35,454	31,379	3,276
% Remaining under-served when current projects complete**	1.6%	9.0%	8.3%

*In progress means there is a project selected or in progress for these households.

**The remaining under-served households when all current Provincially funded projects are complete.

Status of highway cellular connectivity

- The B.C. Government is committed to supporting connectivity on B.C. highways for public safety. Of the 15,000 km of primary and secondary highways in the province, 4,800 km, or just over 32 per cent, is without cellular coverage.

	2019	2024
Total kms of primary and secondary highways	15,000 km	15,000 km
# Highway kms with cellular service	8,900 km	10,200 km
% Highway kms with cellular service	59%	68%

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Connectivity program update (as of January 2024)

Since 2017:

- 208 projects selected (including 7 regional connectivity plans):
 - 95 projects are approved and/or in progress.
 - 113 projects are complete.
- 61 projects are co-funded with the federal government.

Households and communities benefiting:

- Over 95,000 households to be connected from all projects when complete.

Other benefits:

- 532 km of highway cellular, including 252 km and two rest areas along Highway 16 (Highway of Tears).
- 30 highway rest areas, ferry terminals and campgrounds with improved connectivity including cellular coverage and/or Wi-Fi.
- 5 emergency call boxes.

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Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

List of cellular projects:

	Applicant	Rest area	Total	Status
Perow, Highway 16 (Yellowhead Highway)	TELUS	0	8 km	Complete
Wells, Highway 26 (Barkerville Highway)	TELUS	1	6 km	Complete
Highway 14 - Sooke to Port Renfrew	Rogers	1	70 km	Complete
Emergency call boxes on Highway 97	Northern Rockies Regional Municipality	0	5 call boxes	Complete
Highway 95, Golden to Spillimacheen	Rogers	1	25 km	Complete
Highway 97 - Pine Pass	Rogers	0	69 km	In progress
Highway 16 - Prince Rupert to Witset	Rogers	2	252 km	In progress
Highway 3 - Hope to Keremeos	Rogers	2	92 km	In progress
Babine 6 (Lake Babine Nation)	TELUS	0	6 km	In progress
North Takla Lake 7 (Takla Nation)	TELUS	0	5 km	In progress

Contact:

Jeanne Holliss ED, Connected Communities Connectivity Division

Government Financial Information

Communities Benefitting from Provincially Funded Connectivity Projects

February 2024

- Completed Project
- In Progress

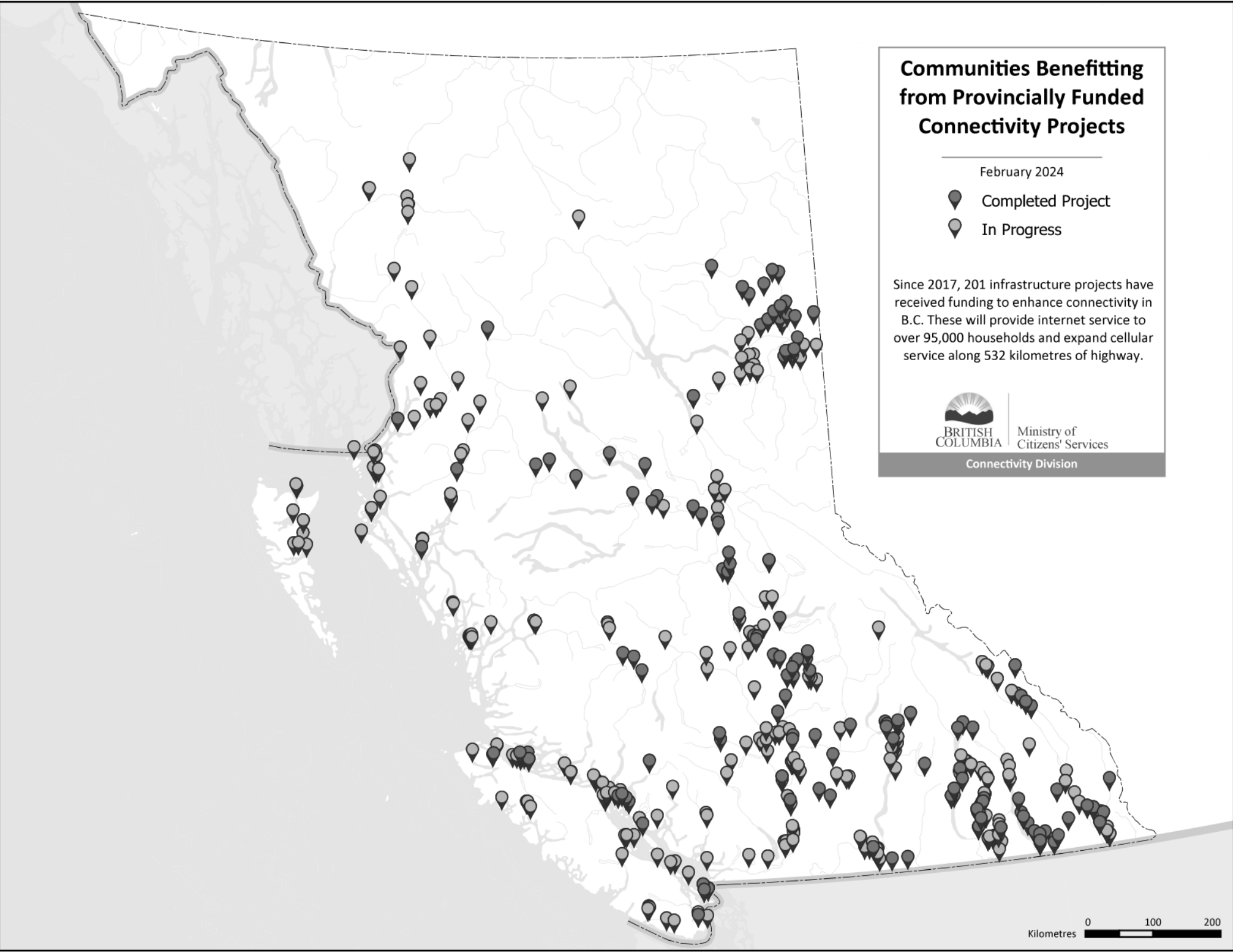
Since 2017, 201 infrastructure projects have received funding to enhance connectivity in B.C. These will provide internet service to over 95,000 households and expand cellular service along 532 kilometres of highway.



Ministry of
Citizens' Services

Connectivity Division

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204/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Indigenous Community Connectivity

Revised: Date of last revision, February 8, 2024

Key Messages:

- **Bridging the digital divide is a critical part of British Columbia's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and our commitment to reconciliation and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).**
- **The Province's commitment to connect all First Nations communities to high-speed internet is outlined in action 4.36 of the Declaration Act Action Plan.**
- **Working together with First Nations, internet service providers and other organizations, we're seeing steady progress.**
- **In 2017, 66 per cent of households on First Nation reserves had access to high-speed internet services. That figure is now 80.3 per cent with an additional 11.4 per cent with projects in progress.**
- **With record investments we are making in connectivity, this number will continue to grow until all communities have access to high-speed internet.**
- **Internet connectivity is a key determinant of the social, cultural economic and overall wellbeing of Indigenous**

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204/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

peoples. It improves access to education, health care services, economic development, and training opportunities.

- In addition to high-speed internet, the provincial and federal governments are supporting a Rogers Communications project to provide continuous cellular coverage between Prince Rupert and Smithers on Highway 16 – the Highway of Tears.
- This fulfils a critical recommendation from the Highway of Tears Symposium Report's 33 recommendations aimed at enhancing safety for Indigenous women and girls.
- Construction started on the cellular build at the end of 2021 and is due to complete later this year.

Questions and Answers:

1) How many First Nation households are without high-speed internet services?

- We estimate 20 per cent of households on First Nation reserves currently do not have access to high-speed internet. When all current provincially funded projects are complete, this figure will drop to approximately 8.3 per cent of households on First Nations reserves that still require a project to have access to high-speed internet services.

2) What has been the progress to date?

- Connectivity funding since 2017 has supported many Indigenous communities to achieve their connectivity goals.

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- In 2017, the CRTC estimated 66 per cent of households on First Nation reserves were fully connected with access to 50/10 Megabits per second internet speeds.
- Now provincial and federal funding has contributed to 80 per cent of First Nations households on reserve with access to high-speed internet services. When current projects in-flight are complete, that number will grow to nearly 92 per cent.
- For example, the \$45 million Connected Coast project (funded 25% by the province and 75% by the federal government) is designed to bring high-speed internet capacity capability to 139 rural and remote communities, including 48 Indigenous communities representing 44 First Nations.
- Intake three (open from January 8 to March 14, 2024) focuses on targeted under-served areas of the province in the north and along the coast and is also open to any First Nations-led or supported project in any area in the province.
- The program will run subsequent intakes until program objectives have been met. It is anticipated that the fourth intake will open in April 2024.
- In addition, the B.C. government has provided funding for the expansion of cellular networks in B.C., with \$90 million allocated so far to improve cellular connectivity on highways and rest areas. This includes 252 km and two rest areas along Highway 16 – the Highway of Tears. This project is set to complete this year with the provincial and federal

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governments both contributing \$2.25M for a total of \$4.5M toward a total project estimated cost of just over \$11M.

3) How does connectivity support reconciliation?

- Supporting connectivity for all First Nations is a foundational government strategy for reconciliation and self-determination.
- Connectivity is represented directly in action 4.36 in the Declaration Act Action Plan 'to ensure every First Nations community in B.C. has high-speed internet services,' and indirectly supports many actions in the Plan, including Indigenous language revitalization, education and training, healthcare, and economic development.

4) How do the Provincial funding programs support a First Nation and their right to self-determination?

- Project applicants are required to submit a Council Resolution with their application to confirm community support for any project that includes a First Nation. As part of the Connecting Communities BC funding program, these are mandatory for all projects, giving communities an important voice for connectivity in their areas.

Contact:

Jeanne Holliss

Executive Director

Connectivity

Government Financial
Information

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Cellular Coverage on Highways and Communities

Revised: Date of last revision, February 8, 2024

Key Messages:

- Cellular connectivity along highways is critical for public safety and access to emergency services – especially along rural and remote stretches.
- That is why in Budget 2023, the B.C. government announced an additional \$75 million, administered through Northern Development Initiative Trust, to support expanding cellular services to another 550 km of highway by 2027.
- This builds on the government's \$15 million commitment from 2020 to support the expansion of highway cellular service and connectivity at rest areas.
- With this initial funding, we exceeded our goal to provide cellular service to 140 km of highway by funding projects that, once complete, will provide cellular connectivity to a total of 532 km of highway.
 - This includes a Rogers Communications project for cellular coverage expansion for 252 km and two rest areas along Highway 16 in northern B.C.
 - This investment will help to ensure that travelers, especially Indigenous women, can call for help and receive the services they need in a timely manner. Closing cellular gaps along Highway 16 was a

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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recommendation in the Highway of Tears Symposium Report.

- It also includes Provincial funding of approximately \$4.9 million to support the installation of seven new cellular towers along Highway 14 on Vancouver Island, bringing cellular coverage to over 70 km of highway between Sooke and Port Renfrew for the first time.

New Cellular Funding – Supplemental Estimates for last fiscal 2022/23:

- Expanding cellular coverage has been identified as a key priority for local governments and First Nations, as it improves personal safety and natural disaster response capacity.
- This investment of \$75 million for cellular projects will expand highway cellular connectivity to another 550 km of highway that are under-served.

Questions and Answers:

1) How many highway kilometres in B.C. do not have access to cellular connectivity?

- B.C. has approximately 15,000 km of primary and secondary highways throughout the province, approximately 4,800 km (32%) of which are without cellular services.
- B.C.'s vast areas, rugged terrain and topography can make expansion of this type of infrastructure challenging and costly for service providers.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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2) How will you provide connectivity along highway segments with no power?

- The Province is closely monitoring all technologies that could increase connectivity along under-served highways, including those with no power. These include future advancements in satellite-to-cellular technology and the use of roadside emergency call boxes on remote stretches.

3) Where have alternate technologies such as satellite call boxes been used?

- Alternate technologies such as roadside emergency call boxes – an emergency telephone service – have been installed along the Alaska Highway where cell coverage is currently unavailable due to a lack of power. This will provide critical access to 911 services on this route.

4) Why will this new funding provide a further estimated 550 km of highway?

- The target of 550 km is the minimum km expected to be achieved from the funding.
- The combination of more challenging and remote terrain and the increased cost of construction have contributed to the estimated kilometres achievable with the \$75 million.

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5) Why can't the BC Government direct service providers to build on certain highways?

- Telecommunications companies are regulated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).
- The Province cannot direct service providers as to where and when they expand their networks, however we are in regular dialogue with service providers to talk about how to overcome gaps in cellular services along highways.

6) Is this new cellular funding part of the Connecting Communities BC program?

- No, the funding has been provided to the Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) to administer a new program, the Cellular Expansion Fund, to advance cellular along underserved highway segments.
- NDIT has administered connectivity programs, including highway cellular, for several years and is an ideal partner to administer this fund.

7) Network outages have shown that communication networks are not as resilient as they could be. What is government doing to ensure people can safely connect with first responders in an emergency?

- Everyone in B.C. should be able to call 911 when they need to.
- Telecommunications companies in Canada are regulated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications

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Commission (CRTC); however, large outages raise concern around the need for a backup network, especially for people who may be in medical distress, or need to call 911.

- On September 8, 2022 the Federal Minister for Innovation, Science and Economic Development announced that the 13 largest telecommunication companies in Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to ensure and guarantee emergency roaming, mutual assistance, and a communications protocol for advising the public and governments during major outages and other emergencies.
- Now, should one of these providers face a major network outage, the other companies have committed to provide the support and assistance necessary so that Canadians can reach loved ones, access 911, and conduct business transactions.

Contact:

Rachel Greenspan Executive Director Connectivity Division
Network BC

Government Financial
Information

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Connecting Communities BC Program

Revised: Date of last revision, February 08, 2024

Key Messages:

- **British Columbia is making significant investments toward our goal of connecting all rural and First Nation households to high-speed internet services by 2027.**
- **On March 8, 2022, the Governments of British Columbia and Canada announced an agreement to invest up to \$830 million (\$415 million each) to support expanding broadband infrastructure in the province to all under-served households.**
- **We're connecting communities because high-speed broadband transforms the way people live in rural and remote communities. It delivers the world to their doorstep through access to employment, education, vital services like healthcare and more.**
- **Connecting Communities BC is the next generation of our provincial funding program for connectivity.**
- **There have been three application intakes so far for this and there will be more, until we reach our goal of connecting all corners of the province to high-speed internet services.**
- **The program funds applicants to build connectivity infrastructure, using multiple technologies – for example, fibre, cable, and fixed wireless.**

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2024/25 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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Questions and Answers:

1. What are the goals of Connecting Communities BC?

- The Connecting Communities BC funding program supports the expansion of high-speed internet services to all remaining underserved rural and Indigenous households in B.C.
- This is the next generation of our connectivity program and a key part of StrongerBC: Good Lives in Strong Communities – government's plan for investing in rural communities to create inclusive growth.
- It aligns with action 4.36 in the Declaration Act Action Plan to connect all First Nations communities to high-speed internet services by 2027 and accelerates Canada's federal connectivity strategy to connect all homes by 2030.
- Currently only an estimated 35,000 households are either underserved or do not have an approved project pending construction to deliver high-speed internet services.

2. What is the application process for funding for Connecting Communities BC?

- Internet service providers, or local and First Nation governments working with internet service providers are eligible to apply.
- The program has completed two application intakes for funding so far, with the third ending March 14, 2024. Assessments of these applications are now in progress.

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- Intake three (open from January 8 to March 14, 2024) is focused on targeting under-served areas of the province in the north and along the coast and was also open to any First Nations-led or supported project anywhere in the province.
- The program will run subsequent intakes until program objectives have been met. The fourth intake is expected to open in April 2024.
- Full details on eligibility and how to apply are on the Connecting Communities BC web pages.

3. Will this program replace existing connectivity funding programs?

- Connecting Communities BC is the next generation of the government's connectivity funding program which will help fund the expansion of internet services to every corner of B.C.
- Projects in progress with the Connecting British Columbia program, administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust, will continue to move forward, and be monitored under that program.

4. What about previous applications submitted to the program?

- Projects that have already been submitted to the Provincial funding programs are in various stages of assessment, negotiation, and construction.
- Specifically, applications submitted to the Connecting Communities BC program during earlier intakes are in review,

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with several approved projects expected to be announced soon.

5. What should communities do if they appear served on the Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) National Broadband Service Availability Map (Map), but do not believe they have access to 50/10 Mbps?

- Internet speeds listed on the Map are reported by service providers to the federal government. Sometimes there are discrepancies between the speeds listed on the Map and those experienced in communities.
- The B.C. government's goal is that every community will have access to minimum internet speeds of 50/10 Mbps by 2027.
- If a community believes they are experiencing lower internet speeds than listed on the Map they may email connectedcommunities@gov.bc.ca and staff in the Connectivity Division will investigate.

6. Are you on target to connect everyone in B.C. to high-speed internet by 2027?

- Yes. The B.C. government has committed to support connecting all households in the province to high-speed internet by 2027.

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7. How will the Province ensure there is access in extremely remote communities?

- Under this program, investments will support a range of infrastructure methods that deliver high-speed internet services including fibre, cable, and fixed wireless.
- Once all possible terrestrial solutions have been examined, the Province may look at satellite solutions for the remaining hard-to-reach households.
- By ensuring there is flexibility in the infrastructure, we can find ways to serve even the most remote households.

Contact:

Rachel Greenspan ED, Network BC

Connectivity Division

Government Financial
Information

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Connected Coast Project

Revised: Date of last revision February 15, 2024

Key Messages:

- Connected Coast is an innovative project that is designed to bring high-speed internet capacity to 139 B.C. rural and remote communities, including 48 Indigenous communities.
- The subsea fibre is laid along the ocean floor to key landing sites on land, bringing high-speed fibre to remote coastal communities.
- The project will serve communities along the B.C. coast from north of Prince Rupert, to Haida Gwaii, south to Vancouver, and around Vancouver Island.
- So far 69 landing sites have been built and over 1,100 km of submarine cable has been laid.
- The project is slated for completion in 2025.

Questions and Answers:

1) How many people and businesses are getting connected?

- This project is designed to bring high-speed internet capacity to 139 rural and remote communities (159 landing sites), including 48 Indigenous communities representing 44 First Nations.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- Communities with existing infrastructure to the home will benefit from increased capacity to their community when the fibre is connected.
- Where last-mile infrastructure does not already exist, there is funding available for under-served areas through the Connecting Communities BC funding program.

2) So, you're not actually connecting these communities – they still must build their own networks?

- For homes to access high-speed internet services, transport fibre (which brings high-speed internet from exchange points to communities) and last-mile projects (which deliver services to the home) are both required.
- Connected Coast is a transport project which brings high-speed internet capacity from an internet exchange point in Vancouver to communities along the coast.
- Some communities that the project reaches will have last-mile infrastructure in place and will benefit from higher internet speeds as soon as the last-mile network is connected to the Connected Coast fibre. Other communities will need upgraded or new last-mile infrastructure that will connect the capacity from Connected Coast fibre to homes and businesses in the community.
- Many last-mile projects that will connect to Connected Coast are already underway.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- Funding is available through the Connecting Communities BC program for last-mile projects in areas that remain under-served with no project in progress and that lack the last mile infrastructure to deliver high speed services when capacity is available.
- As the Connected Coast project is funded by the provincial and federal governments, any service provider can apply for open access to the network for a last-mile or cellular projects.

3) What is the status of the Connected Coast Network project since it was announced in 2018?

- As of the end of 2023, the Connected Coast project is reporting approximately 60 per cent complete with 1,100 km of cable laid and 69 landing sites built.
- The project is divided into segments with construction activities, permitting and consultations progressing on different timelines.
- The project is slated to be completed in 2025.

4) Connected Coast was scheduled to be complete in 2023. Why is the project delayed?

- Connected Coast is one of the largest projects of its kind in the world and the first in Canada.
- It involves installing submarine fibre optic cable along the seabed to serve some of the most remote coastal communities in B.C.

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Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- Projects like these are complex and can take many years to complete.
- The project requires extensive permitting and consultation to ensure that natural habitats are protected and that communities are consulted and represented in decision-making.
- Harsh weather and supply chain issues have impacted some project timelines.
- This project is now well into construction and is expected to be completed in 2025. Once complete, the project will bring high-speed internet capacity to many coastal communities for the first time.

5) How is the Province ensuring that the Connected Coast will be completed by 2025?

- The Province provides funding to connect under-served communities and it is up to the internet service provider to appropriately build and operate the cable.
- The Province is in regular communications with CityWest to ensure that this project is successful and takes steps to remove any potential roadblocks that would delay the project.
- In 2020, a cross-ministry Permitting Navigation Team was established to expedite permit requests and required consultations.

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

6) In light of a recent cable break in the Connected Coast network, are there any safeguards in the project that will prevent network disruptions?

- In late December 2023, the Connected Coast cable between Tlell and Bonilla Island was damaged.
- The service provider is responsible for the design and ongoing operations and maintenance of their network to ensure the successful delivery of reliable services for the communities that they serve.
- CityWest has applied to the federal government for a secondary fibre cable that would serve as a backup to Haida Gwaii.
- In November 2023, Minister Beare wrote to the federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, François-Philippe Champagne, about the need to address the issue of cable damage after the February 2023 cable cut.
- The letter asked the federal Minister to provide clear and decisive framework to protect telecommunications infrastructure and mitigate the inevitable recurring costs to replace and repair this cable.
- The government has requested this cable route be deemed critical infrastructure and protected from sea traffic.
- Other than the link to Haida Gwaii, the Connected Coast has built in resiliency along the main route. Should the fibre be damaged along the main route, internet traffic can be

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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reversed to ensure landing sites on either side of the damage remain operational.

Contact:

Rachel Greenspan Executive Director Connectivity Division Government Financial Information

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Connectivity Project Timelines and Permitting

Revised: Date of last revision, February 08, 2024

Key Messages:

- Everyone in British Columbia should have access to affordable and reliable broadband and cellular services.
- On March 8, 2022, the Governments of British Columbia and Canada announced an agreement to invest up to \$830 million (\$415 million each) to support expanding broadband infrastructure in the province to all underserved households by 2027.
- Due to factors like B.C.'s rugged and diverse terrain, extreme weather events, supply chain issues, complexity of connectivity projects, and extensive permitting requirements, it can take years for service providers to plan and complete projects.
- Many locations require multiple projects to achieve connectivity. This includes expanding backbone infrastructure to bring capacity to regions and communities, as well as last-mile projects to connect homes.
- A total of 208 connectivity projects have been approved for Provincial funding since 2017 (including seven regional connectivity planning projects). Of these, 95 projects are in progress, and 113 projects are complete.
- We are making progress to connect all homes to high-speed internet services. When this funding was announced in 2022,

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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there were 115,000 under-served households in B.C. There are now approximately 35,000 homes that still require a connectivity solution when all approved projects are complete.

- A third intake for the Connecting Communities BC program opened in January and will close March 14, 2024, with a fourth intake expected to open in April 2024. Approved projects from these intakes will support continued progress to address the remaining underserved homes.

Questions and Answers:

1) How will the Ministry of Citizens' Services ensure permitting does not delay the Province's goal of connecting all households by 2027?

- The Ministry has established permitting teams with staff from multiple ministries that track connectivity projects and identify potential permitting challenges early in the process. These teams provide ongoing support and coordination through the permitting process until projects are complete.
- The Connectivity Division also funds 2 positions with the Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship, to specifically focus on receiving and tracking connectivity permitting applications and ensure seamless coordination.
- The Ministry also works with passive infrastructure owners, including BC Hydro, for access to poles and a conduit for government funded connectivity projects.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

2) How is the Ministry of Citizens' Services collaborating with other Ministries to ensure permitting goes smoothly for connectivity projects?

- The Ministry has established open lines of communication with permit-issuing ministries across government and developed processes to improve efficiency. This includes permitting for access to rights-of-way, Crown land, and passive infrastructure, such as utility poles.
- Specifically, the Connectivity Division in the Ministry of Citizens' Services has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship to work collaboratively on permitting for connectivity projects.

3) Do these new supports for permitting apply to projects from the Connecting Communities BC program as well as previous funding programs?

- Yes. Permitting experts in the Connectivity Division work with service providers in the early stages of any government-funded connectivity project to identify and resolve potential challenges that could impact timelines.
- Permitting experts in the Connectivity Division work across government and with service providers to support permitting for any government-funded connectivity project.
- The team works directly with service providers to facilitate the permitting process and identify and resolve potential challenges that could impact project timelines early on.

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Contact:

Rachel Greenspan Executive Director Connectivity Division

Government Financial
Information

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Local Government and Community Supports

Revised: Date of last revision, January 19, 2024

Key Messages:

- **Connecting all rural, remote and Indigenous communities in B.C. to high-speed internet is an ambitious goal. It requires that all levels of government work together with service providers.**
- **Local governments are ideally placed to advise service providers on their community needs and have an important role in championing local interests.**
- **Every application to the Connecting Communities BC program requires a letter of support from the local government (and/or a Council Resolution from the First Nation) before a project is approved. This is to ensure that community needs are considered.**

Questions and Answers:

- 1) What role do local governments have in connectivity funding programs?**
 - **Every application to the Connecting Communities BC program is required to have a First Nation Council Resolution and/or a letter of support from the local government.**

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- This ensures that projects being submitted to the program have community support and the voice of the community is considered.

2) What value does the letter of support or a First Nation Council Resolution provide?

- The letter of support from a local government, or a First Nation Council Resolution, demonstrates that the community has been consulted on a project at the development stage and that community needs are considered.
- Every application to the Connecting Communities BC program requires a letter of support and/or a First Nation Council Resolution for any project that impacts a community.

3) What if a service provider does not want to expand services into a community that is under-served?

- B.C. is a large province and the areas that remain underserved are some of the most challenging, remote, and difficult-to-reach areas.
- It will take a mix of technologies to reach every household in the province and this could include fibre, cable, fixed wireless and potentially satellite solutions.
- For many areas it will take time and multiple projects to serve a community, but we have committed to support the expansion of internet services to every corner of the province.

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- Communities that are having challenges getting service provider support can contact ministry staff in the Connectivity Division for assistance.

4) How can local governments find out more about connectivity and get support for their connectivity needs?

- The Province supports local governments in B.C. in a number of ways:
 - The Province partners with UBCM to support a local government-led peer-to-peer learning forum on connectivity called the Regional Connectivity Knowledge Network (RCKN). The group meets to share experiences, identify topics of interest, and invite experts to the table to inform discussions.
 - The Province has developed a suite of learning resources available on the government website to learn more about connectivity. These resources were developed in response to first-hand experiences discussed at the RCKN and local government feedback.
 - Staff from the Connectivity Division participate in regional broadband committees as requested, providing a provincial perspective and support to the discussion.

5) How can local governments or First Nations learn more about the projects in their area?

- To support local governments, First Nations and the public track the progress of projects, the National Broadband

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Internet Service Availability Map now provides project information when first approved which was not previously available, enabling local governments to track to the street level where projects for improved connectivity are in progress.

- The provincial map of funded projects found on the Provincial Government website, builds on the information provided by the federal map with specific project information including service provider, provincial funding request, project name, expected start date, type of project and number of households benefiting.

Contact:

Jeanne Holliss Executive Director Connectivity

Government Financial
Information

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Internet Affordability

Revised: Date of last revision, January 19, 2024

Key Messages:

- The Province recognizes affordability of internet services can be a barrier for those with low incomes.
- Telecommunications in Canada, including affordability, is regulated by the federal Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).
- The B.C. government promotes affordability by encouraging competition where possible across the province. This is not always possible in rural and remote areas where there may only be one service provider for a community.
- The Government of Canada has established Connecting Families which is an initiative supported by service providers to provide low-income seniors and families to affordable high-speed home internet plans.
- Rogers Communications, TELUS and NorthwEstel are participating service providers in B.C. and offer internet plans as low as \$10 to \$25 a month.

Questions and Answers:

1) Do internet services cost more in B.C.?

- According to the CRTC Communications Market Report (January 2024), B.C. is close to the Canadian average price for a 50/10

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Mbps service at \$75 a month (average is \$76). The lowest prices tend to be in urban areas of the province where competition exists between providers.

2) What plans are available to help with internet affordability?

- There are 3 service providers in British Columbia including Rogers, TELUS and NorthWestTel that offer 200 GB of data usage starting at \$20 a month with no equipment or installation fees as part of the federal Connecting Families Program.
- In addition, TELUS and Rogers have expanded their own low-cost internet service plans to reach other groups beyond those captured by the Connecting Families Initiative.

3) What is the largest barrier for vulnerable populations trying to access low-income plans?

- One of the largest barriers for low-income individuals and families to access low-cost internet plans is the availability of these plans in rural/remote areas.
- Affordability programs are only available where the large Internet Service Providers (ISP) service coverage is available.
- Anyone served by smaller ISPs in rural areas or are served by satellite do not have access to lower-cost plans.

Contact:

Jeanne Holliss Executive Director Connectivity Division

Government
Financial
Information

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Facts and Figures (Digital and Data)

Revised: Date of last revision, February 8, 2024

Overall web analytics on the main government website gov.bc.ca

In 2022

- Content on the main government site was viewed 142.2 million times.
- COVID-19 related content had the highest traffic among all themes in the early months of the year (January through April 2022).
- From May 2022 through December 2022, other themes had the highest monthly page views including health, tax and tax credits, Public Safety and Emergency Services.
- Mobile and non-mobile (desktop) devices accessing gov.bc.ca every month in 2022, was split approximately 42 per cent to 58 per cent respectively, a change from 2021 where mobile usage out-paced desktop use for one-third of the year.

In 2023

- Traffic on the main government site dropped slightly to 137.2 million views.
- Traffic was highest in June with 14 million page views, driven by taxes and tax credits-related content.

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- The health theme had the highest overall traffic in 2023 with 17 million page views.
- From January through December 2023, other themes had the highest monthly page views including: Employment, business and economic development, British Columbians and our governments, and Careers & MyHR.
- Non-mobile (desktop) devices accounted for the most government page views every month in 2023.

Top on-site search terms

- In 2022 there were 4.7 million searches made on Government sites.
- The 2022 top 5 search terms made on Government pages, by term and search count:
 - "behaviour consultant": 22,000
 - "special needs": 19,000
 - "foi": 16,000
 - "current job postings": 13,000
 - "msp": 12,000
- In 2023 there were 4.7 million searches made on Government sites.
- The 2023 top 5 search terms made on Government pages, by term and search count:
 - "behaviour consultant": 23,000
 - "special needs": 22,000
 - "current job postings": 18,000
 - "small business": 17,000
 - "msp": 15,000

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COVID-19 related content

- In 2022 COVID-19 related content was viewed 18.1 million times.
 - The busiest month was January 2022 with 4.8 million views which was likely due to changing restrictions with a new variant.
- In 2023 COVID-19 related content was viewed 2.7 million times.
 - The busiest month was October 2023 with 487,000 views, likely due to interest in updated vaccines.

Translated COVID-19 content

- A project to translate COVID-19 content began in February 2021.
- In 2021, there were 2.6 million page views on COVID-19 translated content, peaking in September 2021 with 404,000 page views that month.
- In 2021, the top 5 languages by page views in that language were:
 - Simplified Chinese: 610,000
 - Traditional Chinese: 512,000
 - Hindi: 510,000
 - Korean: 224,000
 - French: 171,000
- In 2022, Ukrainian and Russian translations were added.
- In 2022, there were 1.3 million page views on COVID-19 translated content, peaking in January 2022 with 340,000 page views that month.

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- In 2022, the top 5 languages by page views in that language were:
 - Hindi: 315,000
 - Simplified Chinese: 286,000
 - Traditional Chinese: 235,000
 - Japanese: 125,000
 - Korean: 76,000
- In 2023, there were 159,000 page views on COVID-19 translated content, peaking in January 2023 with 30,000 page views that month.
- In 2023, the top 5 languages by page views in that language were:
 - Simplified Chinese: 42,000
 - Hindi: 30,000
 - Traditional Chinese: 28,000
 - Japanese: 20,000
 - Spanish: 9,000
- Most of the traffic for Hindi content came from India, whereas the other languages were primarily viewed domestically.

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Google Search results on www2.gov.bc.ca

We track click-throughs from Google searches to the main government website.

In 2022:

- There were 25.5 million clicks from Google searches in 2022.
- In 2022, COVID-19 content received by far the most Google search traffic through most of the year, totalling 4.5 million clicks.
- COVID-19 content was the top searched area for the first part of the year from January through May, and then again in October 2022.
- Other themes that were most popular in 2022:
 - June: Taxes and tax credits
 - July, August, and September: Public safety and emergency services (related to wildfires)
 - November and December: Employment, business, and economic development
- In 2022, the top 5 search terms from Google by clicks were:
 - "bc stat holidays 2022": 170,000
 - "bc government jobs": 152,000
 - "msp": 131,000
 - "health gateway": 118,000
 - "bc covid restrictions": 99,000

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In 2023:

- Clicks from Google searches fell slightly to 23.8 million in 2023.
- In 2023, employment, business and economic development content received by far the most Google search traffic through most of the year, totalling 3.0 million clicks.
- Employment, business and economic development content was the top searched area for more than half of the year including the months of: January, March through May, September, and November through December.
- Other themes that were most popular in 2023:
 - February and June: Taxes and tax credits
 - July and August: Public safety and emergency services (related to wildfires)
 - October: COVID-19 (latest round of COVID and flu vaccine invitations)
- In 2023, the top 5 search terms by Google clicks were:
 - "bc government jobs": 169,000
 - "bc stat holidays 2023": 166,000
 - "msp": 140,000
 - "bc public service jobs": 119,000
 - "bc stat holidays": 107,206

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Overall web analytics for engage.gov.bc.ca

In 2022:

- Overall traffic on engage.gov.bc.ca was down from 2021.
- Content on the site was viewed 490,000 times.
- Traffic was highest in March with 85,000 views and April with 64,000 views.

In 2023:

- Overall traffic on engage.gov.bc.ca was down slightly from 2022.
- Content on the site was viewed 443,000 times.
- Traffic was highest in March with 75,000 page views and in July with 44,000 page views

Chatbot

- In 2022, the chatbot answered 403,000 questions.
- Overall, in 2022 the top categories of COVID-19 answers given were:
 - Vaccines: 154,000 answers
 - Health and Care: 78,000 answers
 - Government Services: 28,000 answers
 - Travel: 27,000 answers
 - COVID-19 Self assessment: 19,000 answers
- In 2023, the chatbot answered 84,000 questions.
- Overall, in 2023, the top categories of COVID-19 answers given were:
 - Vaccines: 18,000 answers

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- Health and Care: 9,000 answers
- Government Services: 7,000 answers
- About COVID-19: 1,000 answers
- Travel: 945 answers

Cyber Security

Security Awareness

- In 2022, OCIO Information Security refreshed the Corporate Supply Arrangement for Security Services to help all 2,400 public sector organizations access skilled security resources.
- OCIO Security continues to onboard public sector organizations to our external security services, including more than 125 public sector organizations as of February 2024
- Over \$25 million annually is spent directly on IT security across government every year and OCIO enhances security with updated technical controls each year.
- Government updated the "Defensible Security" framework in 2022 to help organizations know what to do and how to do it.
- Government initiated CyberBC pilot project in 2023 to establish base security services for public sector entities.
- Government will continue to develop new and expand on existing security services offered by CyberBC.
- Government prevents 1.3 billion unauthorized access attempts per day.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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Modernization of digital and data services for people in B.C.

BC Data Catalogue expands

- In the fall of 2021, the ministry released a new BC Data Catalogue that ensures greater access to data. The catalogue has 3,200 discoverable data sets that are available to the public with an additional 200 datasets available only to government users.
- The BC Data Catalogue provides access to data from 23 ministries and more than 27 public bodies.

New Data Standards and data management tools created

- A New Gender and Sex Data Standard was launched January 2023 that establishes consistent gender and sex terminology, and guidance to ministries on collection of gender and sex data that recognizes gender diversity, minimizes harm, and meets requirements under the BC Human Rights Code.
- A New Metadata Standard was launched in fall 2022 to bring consistency to how government describes its data and to make it interoperable, easier to share, and easier to reuse.
- Indigenous partners are starting to work with us to co-develop a new, updated data standard, under the *Anti-Racism Data Act*, respecting Indigenous identity. The updated standard is expected to be published in 2024 and will provide a consistent way of asking about Indigenous identity in a distinctions-based way.
- The Data Management Policy was released in fall 2023. This is a new tool to support ministries with the consistent and ethical

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management of their data in a strategic and user focused way. This policy outlines high-level requirements for ministries to manage data in their custody and/or control. This includes data creation, collection, sharing, access, and use.

- The Provincial Data Plan is an all of government approach for data to support government meeting its objectives to advance equity, support reconciliation, increase evidence-based decision making, deliver modern services people need, strengthen our data competency and governance.
- Under B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Action Plan, Action 3.15 early in 2024, we released an Indigenous Language Technology Standard and Guidelines. These resources support the inclusion of Indigenous languages in government systems and services, advancing reconciliation and making service delivery more equitable.

Data-informed decision making to support better service delivery

- A recent study linked multiple administrative datasets to produce a repeatable method of quantifying homelessness in B.C. The initial findings reveal that the homeless cohort estimate is larger than expected from previous point-in-time studies, while demographic information aligns closely with historical knowledge. Additionally, geospatial summaries provide insight into the location and movement of the homeless population.
- The BC Data Innovation Program currently has 15 active projects including 12 ministry projects and 3 academic projects. 47 researchers have accessed the platform so far in 2023/24 seeking

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insights and trends into complex issues such as homelessness, health care attachment, road safety, and mental and physical health outcomes for children and youth.

- 42 datasets have been made available by various ministries and public bodies to support research across government and academia through the Data Innovation Program.

Driving innovation and economic recovery

Better access to data and digital business opportunities

- To date, government has made 206 procurement opportunities valued at a total of almost \$54 million available to tech companies of all sizes through the Digital Marketplace.
- In 2023 alone, this included posting 51 procurement opportunities valued at \$24 million on the Digital Marketplace.
- This included a new procurement service Team With Us which provides access for individual tech talent to support internal teams.
- Ten procurement opportunities valued at \$2.6 million occurred in 2023, with half of this going to small or medium sized business.

Increasing digital and data knowledge, skills, and capacity

- A new Digital Era Leadership Program was developed to provide leaders and executives with the knowledge and skills required to lead a modern digital and data driven government.

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- 465 public servants were trained in modern digital and data skills through the Province's Digital Academy in 2022/23. Additionally, 10 self-serve courses were made available to the public service.

Digital Transformation and Pandemic Response

- Public Cloud technology, including platforms provided by commercial cloud providers, represents the next great shift in supporting government to deliver better services to people in British Columbia.
- 30 applications are using public cloud platforms through the federal government's Cloud Brokering Service, including the redesigned day pass system for BC Parks.
- Ministries can now develop new digital services in days rather than months or years using the province's private cloud platform. This platform now hosts 450 applications supporting programs and services across the B.C. Government.
- Government's critical cloud applications include the BC Health Gateway, Wildfire Predictive Services, and Emergency Support Services.

Attracting and retaining digital talent

Improving hiring services and practices and investing in retention strategies

- The Ministry of Citizens' Services launched a digital talent attraction and recruitment pilot program in 2022/23 to bring talented technologists into government.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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- In 2023/24 the program focussed on improving hiring services and practices by developing a new platform to support digital talent hiring, creating two new Service Design roles, and modernizing corporate classification services with the Public Service Agency.
- Competitions have yielded resources for multiple ministries and have been successful in recruiting hard to attract external talent.

Managing government's technology investments

Digital Investment Portfolio

- The Digital Investment Portfolio has grown from \$30 million in 2012/13 to \$110 million today. As of January 2024, the portfolio has 111 projects slated for funding.
- For 2024/25, the portfolio's objectives will be to support key ministry priorities, modernize legacy systems and keep ministries delivering services more quickly and cost-effectively through shared investments.
- These investments help support many of government's essential services. For example, continued investments in the Provincial Health Gateway are empowering patients across the Province with easy access to their health information online. Information available to patients through the Health Gateway includes lab results, medication history, immunization records and health visits.

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Creating safe, secure, and reliable digital and data services

Public and Private Cloud services

- The ministry's Cloud hosting platforms leverage industry leading security toolsets, frameworks and best practices that enable the province to protect data and applications.
- Ministries are supported to build and launch applications using cloud hosting services that are secure and reliable.
- Commercial cloud services ordered through the federal government have been vetted for compliance with British Columbia's legislation and policy.

Contacts:

Government Financial Information

Walter Moser	A/Assistant Deputy Minister	Government Digital Experience	
Alex MacLennan	Assistant Deputy Minister	Enterprise Services	
Hayden Lansdell	Assistant Deputy Minister	BC Data Service	
Genevieve Lambert	Chief Digital Officer	OCIO – Digital Office	250 217-6296
Eowynn Bosomworth	A/Executive Director	BC Data Service	778 698-5070

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: BC Demographic Survey

Revised: Date of last revision, January 15, 2024

Key Messages:

- Everyone deserves access to strong public services.
- Right now, too many people are being left out and left behind because programs and services aren't designed with them in mind.
- Systemic racism and other forms of discrimination have shaped the delivery of government programs and services for generations. It's harmful and hurtful and undermines our goal of delivering strong public services for everyone.
- That's why we launched the BC Demographic Survey.
- The survey was created through engagement with Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities. It included questions related to race, ethnicity, ancestry and other areas of identity.
- The information collected by this survey, combined with information already held by government, will help identify areas where people aren't getting equitable services.
- BC Stats conducted the survey as they are the province's trusted source of official statistics about people and the economy in B.C.

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- The survey was launched June 14, 2023, and ran through to October 15, 2023. Anyone living in B.C. could complete the survey over this period.
- We invited people of all backgrounds to participate in this survey to help Government improve programs and services.
- More than 200,000 people responded. Their responses will support B.C.'s anti-racism research priorities, which were released on June 1, 2023.
- These priorities were created in partnership with the Anti-Racism Data Committee and Indigenous Peoples to focus on the issues that matter most to people in B.C.
- In spring 2024, we'll share more information about the survey results and updates on the research priorities focusing on addressing systemic racism in government services.

Questions and Answers:

1) How will racialized communities be protected from harm?

- We know that collecting racial identity information must be done with great care to avoid further discrimination and bias, while maximizing the power of data to drive much-needed systemic change.
- That's why we have been consulting with Indigenous leaders and racialized communities, as well as the BC Human Rights Commissioner and Information and Privacy Commissioner, to

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identify and address any potential for harm at every stage of research, including data collection.

- We are also collaborating with the Anti-Racism Data Committee and Indigenous Governing Entities on how government can safely continue to collect and use data to identify and eliminate systemic racism. A key focus is to consider cultural safety and community harms when doing our work.
- The Anti-Racism Data Committee will review relevant statistics and other information prior to their release to prevent community harms. The first release of statistics and other information was in May 2023. The next release of statistics and other information will be by June 1, 2024.

Collection of Survey Data

1) Who took the survey?

- We encouraged all residents in British Columbia, of all backgrounds, to take the survey.
- A parent, guardian, or person most knowledgeable about children under the age of 13 could complete the survey on the child's behalf.
- We received more than 200,000 responses.

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2) What were the ways one could fill out the survey?

- The survey was available online at antiracism.gov.bc.ca for anyone living in British Columbia to complete on their phone or computer.
- Over 1.3 million households in British Columbia received an invitation in the mail to fill out the survey online.
- People in British Columbia could also call a toll-free number and participate in the survey over the telephone.
- The survey was available in 15 different languages (English, French, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Farsi, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Tagalog).

3) How did you decide who would get the mailout? Where did that data come from?

- BC Stats randomly selected households for the survey. Neither individuals nor families were selected, only address information was used to invite occupants.

4) How much did this cost taxpayers?

- Systemic racism has many economic impacts that can cost taxpayers, including increased social spending, reduced tax revenue and lower productivity. For example, immigrants with professional credentials are often underemployed when they come to British Columbia.

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- There are also significant additional impacts to the physical and mental health of those who are unable to access strong public services because those services were not built with them in mind.
- The cost of the survey was \$3.46 million. This included the costs of:
 - Designing the survey and testing it with people;
 - Delivering the survey online and via our Service BC call centre;
 - Promoting the survey in print and online media, and doing so in a number of languages used by people in B.C.;
 - Providing grants to 80 community organizations to support uptake; and,
 - Managing the data in a secure, privacy-protecting way.

Survey participation

5) How will this help in bringing about a change in systemic racism?

- Many programs and services in B.C. were designed generations ago, without the benefit of what we know now about inclusivity and equitable access.

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- To identify problems with existing programs and services we need information about what works, what doesn't work, and for whom.
- The information collected through the BC Demographic Survey will help Government identify where people of different backgrounds are experiencing barriers accessing services.
- We needed people of all backgrounds to participate in this survey to get accurate information about where services are leaving people behind.

6) How many people needed to fill out this survey for it to be useful and provide the information that is needed?

- As many as we can. The higher the number, the more accurate the findings. With more than 200,000 responses we now have better and more accurate information to identify systemic racism in B.C. government services.
- We all benefit when government can deliver strong public services that work for everyone in B.C.

7) What was done to make sure the survey is as representative of B.C.'s population as possible, not overrepresenting or underrepresenting certain groups?

- We sent invitations for the survey to more than 1.3 million households across the province – nearly two-thirds of households in B.C. – ensuring that places with small populations are included.

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- Alongside these invitations, we launched a media campaign to raise awareness about the survey. This included advertising in both digital and print outlets in multiple languages.
- We also provided grants to 80 community organizations to raise awareness with their community members and promote the importance of completing the survey.
- Five events at community centres in Surrey were organized to facilitate survey completion.
- Promotional events were also held in Vancouver and Surrey to launch the survey, plus Kelowna, Prince George, Nanaimo, Nelson, and Victoria to raise awareness about the survey.
- With this approach, we reached more than 200,000 people across the province.
- This has provided a good representation of B.C.'s population, and we will be able to do a lot with the amount of data that was provided.

8) Why was it important for non-racialized groups to fill out this survey?

- Public services need to work for everyone.
- Everyone has experienced some challenges with government services.
- Everyone has complex identities.

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- While people may not require certain government services now, they may need them in the future, for example, benefits for the seniors, assistance in case of disability and so on.
- Most importantly, to identify problems within our existing services, we need information about what works, what doesn't work and for whom. With people from all backgrounds participating, we will have demographic information needed to inform our efforts to identify systemic racism and make B.C. a more equitable province.

9) Why did government need race data?

- Systemic racism and other forms of discrimination have shaped the delivery of government programs and services for generations. It's harmful and hurtful and undermines our goal of delivering strong public services for everyone.
- As B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner said in the Grandmother Perspective report on disaggregated demographic data: "We cannot address what we cannot see."
- While we have a lot of data about government services, we have not collected data that lets us see how people with diverse identities access and are affected by those services.
- The information collected by this survey will help identify areas where people aren't getting equitable services because of systemic racism, so government can address them.

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Survey Data and Privacy

10) Doesn't government already have all the information on the demographics of people in British Columbia?

- No. While we do collect some personal information to deliver services in B.C., in general, we do not ask for or collect information on race, ancestry, language or similar identity factors.
- As our province diversifies, this type of information helps us better serve people in British Columbia.
- A key recommendation from the *Anti-Racism Data Act* engagement was that the government should coordinate data collection and minimize the number of times people get asked to share information about themselves.
- This is why BC Stats conducted the BC Demographic Survey.
- BC Stats is connecting this information to other information that we hold to help identify systemic racism in government programs and services.

11) How is the information people provided in the survey being protected?

- BC Stats collected the information as they're the province's trusted source of official statistics about people and the economy in B.C.

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- BC Stats is required to protect confidentiality by law. Under Section 9 of the *Statistics Act*, BC Stats cannot disclose information that could be used to identify a person.
- The information collected is protected under Section 30 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPPA).
- The use of the information in the Data Innovation Program is protected under an internationally recognized Privacy and Security Framework.

12) Where will this information live and will it be shared with other government bodies, public or private bodies?

- It will be put into secure servers and stripped of personal identifiers.
- It will not be shared outside of the Data Innovation Program — a data integration and analytics program for government and academic researchers.
- There is a question on the survey that asks people identifying as Indigenous if they want their responses to the survey shared with Indigenous governments, Nations, and other organizations they identify. Only those who answered yes will have their information shared.

13) Why was it a survey, why can't people give this information when they fill in their MSP forms?

- We heard repeatedly during engagement on the *Anti-Racism Data Act* that people did not feel comfortable providing this

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information during a service interaction – when at the hospital or filling out a form to sign a child up for school.

- What we heard is that people want government to take a coordinated approach to collecting demographic information, and that they are more comfortable providing this type of information to a statistics agency.
- As B.C.'s official statistics agency, BC Stats was selected to lead this work.

Community grants

14) How much did the Province offer in community grants? Who could apply?

- To encourage everyone to take part, grants of up to \$2,500 were available to community organizations or Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit or Métis) governments, tribal councils, band councils, or organizations willing to raise awareness of the survey with their communities and/or clients, to increase trust, and to provide encouragement and support to complete the survey.
- The invitation to apply for the grant was distributed to the 70 organizations originally involved in the engagement activities for the *Anti-Racism Data Act*, 40 organizations from the Resilience BC Network, Métis Nation BC, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, First Nations Leadership Council and 7 Indigenous Governing Entities that expressed interest.

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- The grant information was also shared with Anti-Racism Legislation Community Grant applicants by the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's Social Services Sector Roundtable, and the Anti-Racism Data Committee to distribute to their networks.

15) What was this amount be used for?

- The grant money was used for activities, including but not limited to:
 - Face-to-face outreach on the survey to create awareness with hard-to-reach communities;
 - Tools for people to self-complete the survey such as a tablet;
 - Newsletter or other communications, meetings/events, social media outreach; and,
 - Use of government-issued BC Demographic Survey amplification kits.

16) How much in total funding was used for the community grants? From where?

- The Ministry of Citizens' Services spent \$198,605 on community grants.
- A total of 80 community organizations received the grants.

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17) How do you know the organizations spent the money correctly?

- Each organization that received a grant was required to submit a final report to the ministry on how the grant funds were used.

Contact:

Kathleen Assaf Executive Director BC Data Services 250-208-1979

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Anti-Racism Data Act Implementation

Revised: Date of last revision, January 15, 2024

Key Messages:

- 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 and other racialized people.
- 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 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, Black, and other racialized people.
- The legislation was informed by the thoughts of more than 13,000 British Columbians through engagement with Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities and the feedback continues to inform the implementation of the Act.

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- It was one of the first pieces of legislation to be co-developed with Indigenous Peoples in accordance with *the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
- The implementation of the legislation is informed by the Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee.

If asked about what action has been taken since the introduction of the Anti-Racism Data Act:

- We have established processes for ongoing consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples – working respectfully and closely on anti-racism data initiatives.
- The Anti-Racism Data Committee was established in September 2022 and held 6 meetings so far in 2023/2024. The Committee is made up of 11 members that represent a wide cross-section of racialized communities and geographic regions of B.C.
- Anti-Racism research priorities and process commitments related to how this research will be done were developed in collaboration with the Anti-Racism Data Committee and Indigenous Peoples and published in May 2023.
- The research priorities help ensure that the Province is focused on the areas that matter most to Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities.
- Work on some of the research priorities has begun.

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- Through this research, we will gain valuable insight into systemic racism, and from those insights improve programs and services for all people in British Columbia.
- Indigenous partners are starting to work with us to co-develop a new, updated data standard respecting Indigenous identity.
- The updated standard is expected to be published in 2024 and will provide a consistent way of asking about Indigenous identity in a distinctions-based way.
- This data standard is also responsive to a Research Priority set by Indigenous Peoples.
- As we begin working on research priorities, we are learning what data standards and directives are needed to do this work safely.
- As part of the groundwork for a future data directive and help mitigate harm, we have developed a mandatory 'Anti-racism in Research' training for researchers using the BC Demographic Survey data.
- Before June 1, 2024, we will provide our annual release of statistics and other information related to systemic racism and racial equity.
- In 2024 the release will include a summary report on the BC Demographic Survey, initial statistics related to some of the Research Priorities, and an update on the implementation of the *Anti-Racism Data Act*.

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If asked about how we are consulting Indigenous communities:

- **The *Anti-Racism Data Act* was developed with Indigenous Peoples and as we move forward, we will continue to work with Indigenous Peoples on all data initiatives developed under the Act.**
- **Research priorities were developed in partnership with Indigenous Peoples.**
- **We will continue to work in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples on the release of statistics and other information in 2024.**
- **The BC Data Service (BCDS) holds monthly meetings with Indigenous Peoples to discuss issues and opportunities related to Indigenous data governance and engage on the implementation of the Act.**
- **6 meetings so far in 2023/2024.**
- **The BCDS is working with Indigenous Peoples on a data standard respecting Indigenous identity. The standard will provide a standardized way of asking about Indigenous identity.**
- **How we work with Indigenous Peoples is just as important as the work we do which is why the Ministry of Citizens' Services signed a Protocol with the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) establishing a practical commitment to the principles in the Declaration Act, Declaration Act Action Plan, and the Act.**

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- We are working closely with thought leaders from FNLC to support the creation of a First Nations Information Governance Centre. We are supporting this work under the Declaration Act Action plan and as one of the research priorities set by Indigenous Peoples.

Questions and Answers:

1) Why was the *Anti-Racism Data Act* needed?

- Most ministries don't collect information on race, ethnicity, ancestry, or similar identity factors in their program data, so the extent of systemic racism in government programs and services is unknown.
- The demand for race-based data was heightened by the pandemic. Government has been challenged to identify how racialized groups have fared in terms of both health and employment.
- The BC Human Rights Commissioner, the BC Representative for Children and Youth as well as the B.C.'s Multicultural Advisory Council, have all called for disaggregated demographic data to better understand racism and inequity in B.C.
- The *Anti-Racism Data Act* enables the collection and use of personal information for the purposes of identifying systemic racism. It also commits government to develop standards and directives that ensure that demographic data is collected and

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used in a respectful and culturally safe way while community harms are prevented.

- With this information, we can identify where systemic racism is taking place, helping us improve how programs and services are delivered to racialized communities, including Indigenous People.

2) What action has been taken since the legislation was introduced in June 2022?

- We have established processes for ongoing consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples – working respectfully and closely on anti-racism data initiatives.
- The Anti-Racism Data Committee (the Committee) was established in September 2022 and held 6 meetings so far in 2023/2024. The Committee is made up of 11 members that represent a wide cross-section of racialized communities and geographic regions of B.C.
- Anti-Racism Research Priorities were developed in collaboration with the Anti-Racism Data Committee and Indigenous Peoples and published in late May 2023.
- Research priorities established with the Committee include:
 - Racial diversity within the BC Public Service and equity in hiring and career development
 - Interactions with the justice system and analysis of 'complaints' model

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- Health outcomes, building upon the health system performance framework to understand how the system is performing for different demographic groups
- Understanding how students across demographic groups access and use education supports and their outcomes (from early childhood through to post-secondary education)
- Children, youth, and family wellness in home and away from home
- Economic inclusion, including analysis of unpaid work and foreign credential recognition
- Homelessness, housing supply and security
- Research priorities developed with Indigenous Peoples include:
 - Health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples to understand experiences from an intersectional and holistic perspective
 - Education outcomes for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students from kindergarten to grade 12 to understand experiences, including their access to and use of available supports
 - Social determinants of safety from a holistic lens and fill related data gaps
- As well, Indigenous Peoples prioritized taking a distinctions-based approach to research and continuing to advance our commitment to Indigenous data sovereignty.

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- The Research Priorities help ensure that the Province is focused on the areas that matter most to Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities.
- Work on some of the priorities has begun.
- Through this research, we will gain valuable insight into systemic racism in government programs and services and be able to turn those insights into actions and solutions to make life better for people in British Columbia.
- Indigenous Peoples and other Indigenous partners are starting to work with us to co-develop a new, updated data standard respecting Indigenous identity.
- The updated standard respecting Indigenous identity is expected to be published in 2024 and will provide a standardized way of asking about Indigenous identity in a distinctions-based way.
- This data standard is also responsive to a Research Priority set by Indigenous Peoples.
- As we begin working on research priorities, we are learning what standards and directives are needed to do this work safely.
- As part of the groundwork for a future data directive, we have developed a mandatory 'Anti-racism in Research' training for researchers using the BC Demographic Survey data within the Data Innovation Program.

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- In developing the Anti-Racism training, we had input from academic and subject matter experts, including the Anti-Racism Data Committee.
- Before June 1, 2024, we will release statistics and other information related to systemic racism and racial equity. The Act requires that we do this annually.
- In 2024 the release of statistics and other information will include a summary report on the BC Demographic Survey, initial statistics related to some of the Research Priorities, and an update on the implementation of the *Anti-Racism Data Act*.

3) What are the 2023 - 2025 Research Priorities?

- To address systemic racism in government programs and services, first we need to know where it is happening.
- Under the Act, the Province is required to determine research priorities to help guide government's approach to addressing systemic racism. Under the Act, the Province must release these priorities by June 1, 2023, then provide updates every two years after.
- In late May 2023, we published research priorities developed in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, as well as with the Anti-Racism Data Committee.
- Research priorities established with the Committee include:
 - Racial diversity within the BC Public Service and equity in hiring and career development

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- Interactions with the justice system and analysis of 'complaints' model
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 - Social determinants of safety from a holistic lens and fill related data gaps
- As well, Indigenous Peoples prioritized taking a distinctions-based approach to research and continuing to advance our commitment to Indigenous data sovereignty.

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- Most of the research priorities represent broad sectors, with more specific research to take place in future phases of research.
- Work on some of these research priorities has begun. Some phases of research could be done within a two-year time frame, but other more complex projects will continue to move forward after 2025.
- While these research priorities focus on specific sectors or programs, the Province will continue to address systemic racism in all government programs and services.

4) The BC Human Rights Commissioner recommended aligning with principles from the Data Innovation Program. What is this program?

- The Data Innovation Program is managed by the Ministry of Citizens' Services. It is a data integration and analytics program, meaning it can link data from different ministries across government, de-identify this data and make it available in a secure environment for population-level research projects.
- The program is based on the Five Safes (safe people, safe projects, safe data, safe settings, safe outputs), world-leading best practices for managing safe access to confidential or sensitive data.

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5) The BC Human Rights Commissioner recommended the establishment of a community governance board to work with the government. How has the government responded to this recommendation?

- The Anti-Racism Data Committee which was established under the Anti-Racism Data Act responds to this recommendation.
- The Anti-Racism Data Committee was established in September 2022 and has held 6 meetings so far in 2023/2024.
- Committee members represent a wide cross-section of racialized communities and geographic regions of B.C.
- Government is working in partnership with the committee to ensure that the implementation of the Anti-Racism Data Act is informed by the lived experience and expertise of racialized people.
- Since its establishment, the Committee has recommended research priorities, published in May 2023, helped shape anti-racism training for researchers, and gave input on how to best deliver and promote the BC Demographic Survey.

Race-Based Data Use

6) How will racialized communities be protected from harm?

- We know that collecting race-based data must be done with great care to avoid further discrimination and bias, while maximizing the power of data to drive much-needed systemic change.

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- That's why we consulted with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee, as well as seeking guidance from the BC Human Rights Commissioner and Information and Privacy Commissioner, to identify and address any potential for harm in our work.
- The BCDS has developed 'Anti-racism in Research' training for data researchers working on research priorities or wanting to access the BC Demographic Survey Data to help ensure the research is done safely. The training includes guidance on cultural safety and mitigation of community harm.
- The Anti-Racism Data Committee will review relevant statistics and other information prior to its release in 2024 to prevent community harms.

7) **Who is going to hold government accountable through this work?**

- Under the *Anti-Racism Data Act*, we appointed the Anti-Racism Data Committee.
- The Committee helps us to centre the voices of Indigenous, Black and other racialized peoples in this work and to help mitigate potential harm to communities.
- The Act also has requirements to ensure the work done to identify and address systemic racism is transparent, including the requirement to release statistics or other information related to systemic racism and racial equity every year.

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- In late May 2023, we published research priorities developed in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee, as well as five process commitments to guide every stage of research.
- The research priorities help ensure that the Province is focused on the areas that matter most to Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities.

8) Why does government need demographic information about race? Why is government giving priority to systemic racism?

- Systemic racism and other forms of discrimination have shaped the delivery of government programs and services for generations. It's harmful and hurtful and undermines our goal of delivering strong public services for everyone.
- As B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner said in the Grandmother Perspective report on disaggregated demographic data: "We cannot address what we cannot see."
- While we have a lot of data about government services, we have not collected data that lets us see how people with diverse identities access and are affected by those services.
- The information collected by the BC Demographic survey will help identify areas where people aren't getting equitable services because of systemic racism, so government can address them.

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- 9) **Advocates have been calling for government to address systemic racism for years. What is it taking so long?**
- I want to acknowledge that many advocates have been speaking out for decades and leading the charge.
 - That's why we've taken foundational steps to embed anti-racism work and anti-racism engagement into B.C. law.
 - A critical part of the *Anti-Racism Data Act* is the requirement that government work with the Anti-Racism Data Committee and Indigenous Peoples.
 - Tackling systemic racism means listening and working together. It takes time to build trust and having a strong level of trust is critical to developing the processes and safeguards needed to ensure Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities benefit from data collected under the Act.
 - There's real trauma associated with racism in the communities that are experiencing it, and we took the time to engage with communities and the leadership of the Anti-Racism Data Committee, to do it right.
 - We know that we won't be successful if we don't move at a pace that is trusted by Indigenous and racialized people.
- 10) **How is the Attorney General's broader Anti-Racism legislation different from the *Anti-Racism Data Act*?**
- In 2022, government enacted the *Anti-Racism Data Act* to safely collect race-based information.

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- This information will be used to help identify where people aren't getting equitable services as a result of systemic racism.
- The broader anti-racism act will require government to take action on systemic racism uncovered through data collection and to provide supports to those who have been negatively impacted.

Contact:

Beth Collins ED, Policy and Legislation BC Data Service 250-361-5378

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Population Projections

Revised: Date of last revision, January 22, 2024

Key Messages:

- BC Stats produces population projections – at a community-by-community level – to help understand how much growth will occur and where, so that B.C. can plan and build programs, policies and services to address people's needs.
- As of July 2023, there are estimated to be 5.49 million people in British Columbia. This is an increase from 5.32 million people a year earlier, or 3.2 per cent. This is the largest annual population increase in B.C. since the mid-1990s.
- BC Stats projects the population of B.C. to continue increasing through 2046, from 5.49 million people in 2023 to 7.90 million in 2046.
- Increased population growth is a result of increases in immigration, with a net increase of 167,000 people coming to B.C. through international and interprovincial migration, year to date, as of July 1, 2023.
- For the first time in recorded history, in 2021 B.C.'s mortality rate exceeded its fertility rate, leading to a negative natural population growth rate.
- B.C.'s natural population growth rate has been in steady decline since 2009. The annual number of births in B.C. has

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been relatively stable at between 40 to 45 thousand annually since 2000; however, the number of deaths annually has been steadily increasing as B.C.'s population ages.

Questions and Answers:

1) How has population grown in B.C. and Canada?

- B.C. is currently experiencing a population boom. In the last 12 months, B.C.'s population grew by more than 162,000 representing an annual growth rate of 3 per cent, a growth rate B.C. has not experienced since 1994.
- B.C. is not alone in experiencing unusually high population growth. According to Statistics Canada, in the last 12 months Canada's population grew by 1.16 million (representing an annual growth rate of 3 per cent). Canada has not seen this level of population growth since the 1950s at the peak of the post-war baby boom.
- All provinces are experiencing growth rates that haven't been topped in more than 20 years. Internationally, Canada's rate of population growth continues to lead the G7 and will likely be ranked among the 20 fastest growing countries in the world for 2023.

2) What level of immigration does B.C. require going forward?

- Given the rapid aging of the population and the low fertility rate, the proportion of people of working age (18 to 64 years old) in B.C. is expected to shrink rapidly without international

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migration. As such, immigration is essential to sustain B.C.'s working-age population.

3) What are the latest trends in international migration to B.C.?

- International migration is expected to remain the main contributor to population growth for the foreseeable future. In fact, this component of population change is expected to drive all the population growth in B.C. in the following years. Net inter-provincial migration and natural population growth are both expected to continue to decline in the coming years.

4) What are the latest trends in the natural population change in B.C. in the coming years?

- The population of the province is aging rapidly as the Baby Boomers, Canada's largest population cohort, reach retirement age. The share of people aged 65 and older is expected to exceed 20 per cent in the coming years.
- The aging of the population combined with historically low fertility rates implies that the natural population change in B.C. is expected to be negative in the coming years. Thus, the population of B.C. would shrink without immigration.

5) What parts of B.C. have experienced the largest population increases?

- The large metropolitan areas of B.C. – Metro Vancouver and the Capital region – received more than 86 per cent of the province's international migrants in 2022 according to Statistics Canada.

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- If trends continue with population growth dominated by international migration, large metropolitan areas are expected to add the largest number of people in the coming years. By the year 2029, Surrey is expected to surpass Vancouver as B.C.'s largest municipality.

6) Why does BC Stats do a population projection if Statistics Canada also does one?

- Statistics Canada produces population projections for Canada and all the provinces and territories every five years, after each Census cycle. As such, the projections from Statistics Canada can become outdated if there are large unforeseen developments in the 5-year interim between updates. Statistics Canada does not produce population projections for sub-provincial geographies.
- In contrast, BC Stats produces population projections annually for both B.C. and sub-provincial geographies including municipalities, regional districts, health areas, school districts and various other B.C. administrative boundaries. This geographically disaggregated information is used by multiple branches of government and the private sector for planning.

Contact:

Kathleen Assaf

Executive Director

BC Data Service

250 208-1979

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Indigenous Language Names in Records, ID, Systems and Services (BCDS leading, SBC supporting with BC Registries)

Revised: Date of last revision, February 26, 2024

Key Messages:

- We recognize that Indigenous people have the right to use names in their language. Part of reconciling the harms of colonization is making changes to respect this right.
- Action 3.15 of the Declaration Act Action Plan communicates our commitment to including Indigenous languages in government systems and services, like driver's licenses, school registration, and health records.
- In March 2023, the Ministry of Health began issuing birth certificates with Indigenous language names.
- This is an important first step, but we know we have a lot more to do.
- We know that accommodating an Indigenous name in one system but not the others risks cutting individuals off from crucial services. We must proceed carefully to ensure people's access to services is maintained.
- We are looking at an interim dual language approach which will work with systems that can accept Indigenous language characters, and systems that can't.
- This means we can make meaningful progress right away in the area we have heard from Indigenous people is most

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important: using people names in important services like name registration and school report cards, while accounting for dependencies on other systems and maintaining access to services.

- **There are significant technical, policy and legislative changes needed, along with coordination of changes across government and with other jurisdictions as systems and services have critical dependencies. This is no small task and involves over 1,200 technology systems and programs in every ministry across government.**
- **As we are working on dual language identification like birth certificates, we are also beginning to ready our technology and services across government, guided by Indigenous peoples' priorities. This includes implementing a policy in January 2024 to ensure all future technology investments by government will support Indigenous languages.**
- **Within 3 years, we are targeting for Indigenous people to be able to use their languages to register names and receive a birth certificate, register for a B.C. Services Card, register a business and use those names in priority services.**
- **We are targeting full implementation within 10 years so Indigenous people can use their language names for people, businesses and places across government services, and interim dual language approaches can be phased out.**
- **Ongoing and continued consultation with Indigenous peoples is critical to guide this work, what is prioritized first, and what solutions are put in place. We need to make sure**

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we move together and implement these changes in a way that reduces harms and doesn't inadvertently create new barriers.

Questions and Answers:

1) The Province already has an inclusive font. Why can't you include Indigenous languages in government records and systems today?

- Changing or downloading a font that can recognize Indigenous language characters is one small step in the process. Over 1,200 systems in core government are impacted—that means 1,200 systems that can't read or store Indigenous characters. This is not an easy fix in any system, and the complexity and scale are enormous.
- To make those systems work with Indigenous language characters, there is a specific computer coding language that needs to be used, specialized fonts and keyboards, compatible databases, programming so systems can talk to each other and share information back and forth, and programming to display and print.
- We also need to change laws, policies and processes in most service areas.

2) How long will this take?

- Citizens' Services is consulting Indigenous peoples to plan the services to prioritize over the next 3-5 years and then longer term. This plan will ensure any changes to government

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systems are guided by Indigenous peoples' priorities, minimize harm, and do not disrupt access to critical dependent services.

- The target is to have all government systems able to support Indigenous languages within 10 years.

Contact:

Eowynn
Bosomworth

A/Executive
Director

BC Data Service, Data
Systems and Services

Government Financial
Information

2024/25 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Provincial Data Plan, Including New Data Standards

Revised: Date of last revision, January 16, 2024

Key Messages:

- **The Provincial Data Plan will help government have the right data at the right time to understand complex issues and make good decisions. The Plan has five pillars to:**
 - **Advance equity,**
 - **Support reconciliation,**
 - **Increase evidence-based decision making,**
 - **Deliver the modern services people need, and**
 - **Strengthen data competency and governance.**
- **Reliable, timely, quality data is needed to understand and identify workable solutions to big issues in B.C. like homelessness, systemic violence against women and girls, and the impact of climate change.**
- **We need to use data to make good decisions, to ensure our services meet people's needs, and to drive equity and fairness in government programs.**
- **Under the Provincial Data Plan, we are setting a strong foundation for how data is managed and used, including much needed policy and guidance.**

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- Implemented in 2023, the Data Management Policy helps ministries manage their data consistently and ethically in a strategic and user-focused way.

Data standards

- Also implemented in 2023, the new Gender and Sex Data Standard improves how we collect and use data to create policies and programs to serve B.C.'s gender-diverse population.
- In early 2024, the Indigenous Languages Technology Standard will be implemented. It will ensure all future technology investments by government will support Indigenous language data to deliver more inclusive services to Indigenous people living in B.C.
- We also continue to support implementation of the *Anti-Racism Data Act*. We have worked with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee to establish research priorities which will give valuable insight into systemic racism, and from those insights improve government programs and services for all people in the province.
- We are creating a stronger B.C. by taking innovative approaches to how we use data as building blocks for modernizing government services.

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Questions and Answers:

1) How are you working with Indigenous Peoples on data?

- Under *B.C.'s Declaration Act*, we are working on two Actions: Action 3.14 to support the establishment of First Nations governed and mandated regional data governance centre, and Action 3.15 to include Indigenous language data in systems and services.
- We are beginning to work with Indigenous Peoples and other Indigenous partners to co-develop an updated data standard regarding Indigenous identity.
- The updated standard is targeted for release in 2024 and will provide a consistent way of asking about Indigenous identity in a distinctions-based way.
- This data standard is also responsive to a Research Priority set by Indigenous Peoples under the *Anti-Racism Data Act*.

Are we going to allow the private sector to access sensitive data?

- No. B.C. government is responsible for protecting privacy, including sensitive data that is collected by government.
- Under the Provincial Data Plan, and to increase evidence based decision making, Citizens' Services programs and services such as the Data Innovation Program and Data Science Partnerships will be enhanced to support analysis on de-identified data. It does not permit access by the private sector.

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- Citizens' Services provides government's open data and licensed data through the B.C. Data Catalogue where the private sector can access non-sensitive government data (e.g., natural resources, statistics on government programs).

2) How is the plan addressing the issue of data sharing across ministries while still respecting privacy?

- Privacy considerations are always critical when sharing data. The legal requirements to protect personal information remain in place.
- The Provincial Data Plan includes data governance, policy, and technology initiatives to overcome barriers that currently exist for managing and sharing data while ensuring privacy and security requirements are met. This includes guidance in the Data Management Policy and the *Anti-racism Data Act*.
- In addition, the Data Innovation Program, using the internationally recognized Five Safes (safe projects, safe people, safe data, safe settings, safe outputs) for privacy, will continue to guide how integrated de-identified data is used safely.

Contact:
Eowynn
Bosomworth

A/Executive Director BC Data Service

Government Financial
Information

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Digital Investment Portfolio

Revised: Date of last revision, January 26, 2024

Key Messages:

- People and businesses need government services that are effective and efficient.
- Whether it is improving access to primary care or addressing housing affordability, we use digital channels to deliver many of our services.
- Each year, government invests in information management and information technology (IM/IT) to ensure infrastructure is current and safeguarded.
- These investments support the services and programs that people count on.
- Government's IM/IT capital budget is approximately \$110 million and administered by the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Digital and Data.
- This budget funds diverse digital solutions to address government priorities. Examples include:
 - The Online Building Permit Submission and Code Compliance Tool project to speed up building permit review times in 20 pilot jurisdictions.

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- **The Pay Transparency Reporting Tool project for employers to prepare and post pay transparency reports required under the new Pay Transparency Act, which address systemic discrimination in the workplace.**
- **And the Unity Grant Management project to streamline and enhance government's delivery of grant programs that drive economic growth.**

Questions and Answers:

1) How does government decide on the right value for the envelope?

- The size of the envelope is established through an annual intake process.
- This process identifies demand for IM/IT capital from across government.
- Based on this demand, the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Digital and Data provides a recommendation on the size of the envelope that is then set by Treasury Board.

2) Are all IM/IT investments funded through this envelope?

- All IM/IT investments under \$10 million in a single year and under \$20 million in total require the approval of the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Digital and Data.
- Larger IM/IT investments require Treasury Board approval.

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3) How has the size of the IM/IT Capital envelope evolved over time?

- The IM/IT Capital envelope has doubled since 2016/17. The largest recent increase was in 2019/20 when an additional \$20 million per year was approved.
- That increase reflected the growing number of new digital priorities across government.

4) What is the status of the 2023/24 IM/IT Capital envelope?

- As of January 20, 2024, there were 111 projects slated for funding.
- Government is working to refine and potentially approve 80 more projects that were identified during this year's project intake.

5) How are you supporting government's emerging priorities with an envelope that is already mostly allocated?

- The Deputy Ministers' Committee on Digital and Data sets annual investment objectives to invest in projects that help make B.C. Government services more inclusive, reliable, easy to use, and responsive to people's modern expectations.
- One of the investment categories is specifically to support ministry priorities and investments that help ministries transform their services and deliver on mandate

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commitments and legislated requirements. Ministries are able to prioritize their projects to respond to emerging priorities, such as housing affordability and primary care.

- The Deputy Ministers' Committee on Digital and Data closely monitors approved projects funded through the envelope and can re-allocate funds that become available to other top priority projects.

Contact:

Genevieve Lambert Chief Digital Officer Digital Office 250 217-6296

2024/25 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Digital Plan and Government Modernization

Revised: Date of last revision, January 15, 2024

Key Messages:

- Government is delivering efficient, effective and easily accessible digital services to people living in B.C. 24/7.
- The pandemic, floods, and wildfires reinforced the importance of providing easily accessible, accurate and reliable digital services to the people of British Columbia.
- People need access to digital information that they know is safeguarded by the most current and secure technology, so their personal information is not compromised.
- Our government is investing in digital infrastructure to continuously improve the services that people count on.

Questions and Answers:

1) What is the Government of B.C. doing to upgrade its services?

- With support and leadership from the Ministry of Citizens' Services (CITZ), our government is adopting digital tools and practices to modernize its services.
- We are making good progress. For example, we are increasingly providing further services online and investing in digital identity.

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- That said, we are working to continuously improve digital services.
- CITZ has worked with partners across government and the broader technology sector to develop principles for digital change.
- These principles are now embedded in policy and guide the work of all public servants involved in improving and delivering digital services.
- In Spring 2023, CITZ released the new cross-government digital plan, which outlines measures government will take to modernize services to better meet peoples' needs.
- The Digital Plan is the successor to 2019's Digital Framework and represents our next step forward in service modernization.
- In Fall 2023, CITZ released the Digital Code of Practice, which is a companion guidebook for all public service employees and contractors involved in and accountable for digital service delivery. It provides practical guidance on using technology and digital services to modernize government operations and deliver improved services to citizens.

2) Why is government interested in modernizing its digital services?

- Digital approaches are critical to the success of every government initiative.
- People expect to access services online, as well as in person.

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- With the Connecting BC program bringing high-speed internet to households in rural and underserved areas of BC, government can provide better access to services to more people through online channels.
- Using modern tools and ways of working allows government to be more responsive, adaptable, and effective in meeting the needs of British Columbians as we tackle today's challenges.
- For example, digital tools help ensure child protection workers have the right information while working in the field or help mine inspectors upload compliance data from remote locations.
- Similarly, digital tools allow people to securely access their own health records online.
- They also helped evacuees during emergency events get the resources and support they need without waiting in line at evacuation centres.
- Digital tools are also strengthening the work of public servants. For example, every public servant now has access to modern digital tools to support their work, like the Virtual Private Network and Microsoft 365 (including Teams).
- There are many benefits associated with investing in digital government.
- They include improving people's experiences, reducing costs, supporting an active technology ecosystem within the B.C.

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economy, and managing the risks that can be associated with major technology projects.

3) How has digital helped government improve services?

- Over the past few years, the B.C. Government is increasing its investment and is using modern digital approaches to improve many services for the people of British Columbia. Impacts from these investments has helped remove barriers to access services and increased responsiveness to people's needs.
- For example, after the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, many people could no longer access counselling and mental health supports. To address this issue, government partnered with Foundry BC to launch a new digital service that allows youth to connect to mental health and substance use services via mobile phones or computers. Available services include virtual counselling sessions, drop-in peer support sessions and informational guides.
- For many years, people of B.C. could choose their gender on their identification as male, female, or X (non-binary), but this option was not reflected on forms and applications throughout the social sector. Now 2,000 applications and forms are being updated to allow non-binary expression of gender.
- By making a tool available for people in B.C. to provide government with feedback on the accessibility of its services, we are able to improve access to services for all British

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Columbians.

- Previously, people who needed to register and manage their businesses, co-operatives and not-for-profit societies needed to use manual, paper-based processes. Today, people in B.C. can register and manage their organizations using modern, faster, and more convenient online services.

Contact:

Gen Lambert Chief Digital Officer OCIO Digital Office 250-217-6296

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Data Residency, Security and BC Cloud Initiative

Revised: Date of last revision, February 5, 2024

Key Messages:

- **Cloud technology represents the next great shift in supporting government to deliver better services to people in British Columbia.**
- **Adopting cloud services and technologies allows government to use modern tools and systems to improve how we deliver the supports and services people living in B.C. count on.**
- **Many of the most common tools we use for communicating with people and for improving and streamlining government processes have already moved to cloud, or soon will.**
- **The Province is taking a coordinated approach to cloud, empowering ministries and organizations to work together.**

Questions and Answers:

1) How is the B.C. government enabling the use of cloud?

- **The B.C. government is implementing a service model that enables ministries to build and launch applications using cloud hosting services.**
- **The B.C. government worked with the federal government to order cloud services that comply with British Columbia's legislation and policy.**

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2) Why is the B.C. government working with the federal government?

- The B.C. government is using the federal government's Cloud Brokering Service to leverage existing compliance and contract work and learn from their experience delivering cloud hosting services.
- Joining the federal Cloud Brokering Service enabled the province to benefit from the procurement process and technical, privacy and security protections provided by the Government of Canada.

3) What cloud vendors are being used in the B.C. government?

- Ministries access cloud on a case-by-case basis and are engaging with a variety of cloud vendors.
- The B.C. government is widely using cloud-based collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams, SharePoint and Exchange Online.
- The B.C. government is also implementing a service model to enable access to cloud services for hosting applications.
- The first service order to support this was with Amazon Web Services and further service orders with other cloud vendors are anticipated to be completed in the coming months.

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4) How is the B.C. government ensuring the security and privacy protection of information when using cloud?

- Protecting people's personal information is a top priority.
- The Province has rigorous privacy and security assessment processes and policies to ensure data is protected. This includes the processes to adopt cloud services. Ministries must complete an additional privacy assessment whenever sensitive personal information is stored outside Canada.
- This additional assessment includes details on where and how the personal information is stored and on the technical, security, administrative and/or policy measures to protect personal information.

5) When is cloud going to be available for all ministries?

- Ministries can access cloud on a case-by-case basis if their use is compliant with B.C.'s legislation and policy.
- The Province worked with the federal government to order cloud services for hosting applications using a service model that complies with B.C.'s legislation and policy.
- Through learnings from early adopters, the province aims to increase corporate access to cloud services in the coming months.

Contacts:

Genevieve Lambert	Chief Digital Officer	Digital Office,	250 217 6296
Irene Guglielmi	Executive Director	Enterprise Services	250 216 7038

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Cyber Attacks and Security

Revised: Date of last revision, January 31, 2024

Key Messages:

- Protection of government data and networks is a top priority for this government, especially where it concerns British Columbians' personal information.
- Governments must take steps to protect themselves from online attacks no matter the source or the strategy.
- Effective cybersecurity requires ongoing vigilance and maintaining up-to-date technology.
- In 2021, we significantly improved the protection and reliability of our security systems, and we continue to invest in improving security controls.
- In British Columbia, we have the Office of the Chief Information Officer, which provides government with strategy and leadership in IT security and 24/7 network protection.
- We have strong security since government records hold sensitive information, including people's personal information.

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- While this ministry works hard to protect government-held information, everyone in B.C. should be just as careful and aware of cyberthreats and protect their online information.
- We continuously work to raise awareness and provide training in cybersecurity and information protection for all employees.
- By working together, we can help reduce cybercrime throughout the province.

Questions and Answers:

1) How long has it been since the Province experienced a cyberattack?

- Government has people, processes, and technology in place to prevent, detect, and respond to cyberattacks.
- Government prevents 1.3 billion unauthorized access attempts per day.
- Government continues to invest and upgrade our cybersecurity tools to prevent, detect, and respond to cyberattacks.

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2) Public and private sector bodies are targeted with increasing scams and cyberattacks. What is government doing to prevent cyberattacks?

- Government has a dedicated team of professionals to combat cyberattacks.
- Each year the government invests and upgrades our cybersecurity tools to prevent, detect, and respond to cyberattacks.
- Government offers training in Security Awareness to staff and conducts regular security campaigns on the latest trends and prevention methods.

3) What support is government providing to assist the public sector and protect personal information?

- Government shares significant tools and resources to assist other organizations and individuals, so they know what to do to prevent cybercrime.
- Government updated the "Defensible Security" framework in 2022 to help organizations know what to do and how to do it.
- Government initiated the CyberBC pilot project in 2023 to establish base security services for public sector entities.
- Government will be offering CyberBC services to the public sector in 2024.

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- Government will continue to develop new and expand on existing security services offered by CyberBC.
- Government has established a cyber-security professional development program to complement the services offered by CyberBC.
- In addition, government holds conferences, and publishes information and videos on the government website.
- Over \$25 million is spent directly on IT security across government every year.

4) What support is government providing post-secondary institutions considering the recent Vancouver Island University (VIU) audit report?

- Government has established a cyber-security professional development program to complement the services offered by CyberBC.
- CyberBC is positioned to aid post-secondary institutions in addressing the recommendations from the auditor general.
- CyberBC's initial services will include governance and policy documents to support organizations in establishing a cybersecurity governance structure.
- We have developed cybersecurity training that would be suitable for board members.

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5) We have heard of other organizations in the province being subject to cybersecurity attacks. Is the Province at risk?

- Government has a dedicated team of professionals to combat cyberattacks.
- Each year the government invests and upgrades our cybersecurity tools to prevent, detect, and respond to cyberattacks.
- Government has people, processes, and technology in place to prevent, detect, and respond to cyberattacks.
- Government provides informational resources to public and private sector organizations throughout the province and provides access to additional resources for public sector organizations.
- Government is available for public sector organizations to call in the event of a breach for assistance and advice.

6) We have heard that government has banned the use of TikTok.

- Protection of government data and networks is a priority for Government.
- B.C. Government is committed to strong privacy and security controls and to increasing awareness of best practices for information technology overall.

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- B.C. Government constantly evaluates potential threats and examines risks, leveraging a well-established process for Privacy Impact Assessments and Security Threat Risk Assessments.
- TikTok was banned by multiple jurisdictions including Canada, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta due to privacy and security concerns.
- This ban is on the installation of the app on government managed devices.
- Privacy protection authorities for Canada, Quebec, British Columbia, and Alberta will conclude their investigation of TikTok and publish a report with findings.
- B.C., along with the other jurisdictions, is awaiting the results of the privacy authorities' report.

7) Has the government of B.C. banned any other apps?

- B.C. currently has two other apps that are banned from being installed on government managed devices.
- WeChat and ToTok are banned due to privacy and security concerns.

Contact:

Don Costello

A/Executive Director,
Information Security

OCIO, Enterprise
Services

Government Financial
Information

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: **Supporting Flexible Work for the Public Service**

Revised: Date of last revision, February 2, 2024

Key Messages:

- **Prior to the pandemic, most public service employees worked from permanent office locations. Since March 2020, Citizens' Services has been instrumental in supporting the BC Public Service to work and deliver services remotely.**
- **The increase in remote working due to COVID-19 provided an opportunity for the BC Public Service to create new, flexible, modern workplaces that support a truly engaged and productive workforce.**
- **The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) continues to work with ministries to ensure that employees have the tools they need to safely serve the people of British Columbia.**
- **Among others, this includes:**
 - **Ministry of Attorney General: The virtualization of courts to provide efficient and expedient options for court proceedings, for example overseas evidence enablement / bail hearings, both on weekdays and weekends.**

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Questions and Answers:

1) How much did government spend on enabling public servants to work remotely?

- As result of the upgrade to the Virtual Private Network and other technology requirements, the Province incurred an estimate of \$1.77 million in additional costs to date.
- Existing infrastructure supported the Province's ability to quickly react to the evolving needs of an expanded remote workforce.
- The Province has, however, seen similar cost savings in 2022, due to employees working remotely and a significant decrease in printing .

2) How is government ensuring that public servants are accessing information securely while working remotely?

- The protection of government data and networks is a top priority for this government, especially where it concerns British Columbians' personal information.
- Government has a dedicated team of professionals to combat cyberattacks and additional staff in ministries.
- Government employees receive mandatory training on their responsibilities to protect government information and have access to secure remote access tools.
- Government has implemented additional technical controls around strong multi-factor authentication practices and

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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enhanced email protection, to further increase security and protect information.

3) What is this government doing to ensure public servants can work remotely post pandemic?

- Systems have the capacity to handle tens of thousands of remote workers at any given time.
- In May 2023, this service returned to 2020 levels of use with over 24,000 different user connections per week.
- Employees use communication programs such as Microsoft Teams, Skype, and teleconferencing for meetings.
- Government offices are being upgraded with new connectivity and video-conferencing equipment so employees can better collaborate with those working in the office and remotely.

Contact:

Natalie Branch ED, Service Management Branch OCIO-ES 250 818-5763

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Facts and Figures – Freedom of Information

Revised: Date of last revision, January 17, 2024

- **The 2022/23 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Annual Report provides highlights of activities and trends, as well as data on key indicators of the FOI system, and the protection of privacy.**
- **Since fiscal year 2020/21 we have committed over \$7.704 million on a multi-year project to modernize and improve the FOI system across government to ensure people get the information they need, faster.**

FOI Request Volumes

- Over the past 5 years, the average number of FOI requests received by ministries is just over 10,000.
- In 2022/23, the Province received 7,017 requests, representing about 2.5 million pages of information.
- Definition of “on time”: A request is considered on time if the applicant receives a response within the legislated time limit for responding. All requests must be responded to within 30 days unless a time extension is permitted.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Percent of on time Freedom of Information Requests

Percent of on-time Freedom of Information Requests		
Fiscal Year	Forecast	Actual
2019/20	85%	83%
2020/21	85%	85%
2021/22	85%	81%
2022/23	90%	78%
2023/24	84%	TBC

Proactive Disclosures

- In 2022/23, we started releasing Parliamentary Secretaries' calendars proactively, bringing the total number of proactive disclosure categories to 15.
- In 2022/23, ministries published over 4,500 proactive disclosures through these 15 ministerial directives alone — making it easier for people to access information at their convenience, and without the need for a formal FOI request.
- In the past five years, ministries have proactively published over 19,000 disclosures under these mandatory directives.

Privacy Breach Reporting

- A privacy breach is an information incident involving personal information such as names, birth dates, financial information or health information.
- The majority of reported privacy breaches are accidental, minor in nature, and are quickly resolved.

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- The reporting of privacy breaches has been steadily increasing since 2015 due to improved training, mandatory reporting requirements and the implementation of new tools and technologies across government. At the same time, the seriousness of privacy breaches has been declining.
- Breaches classified as moderate to serious accounted for 18 per cent of those reported in 2022/23.

Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs)

- Privacy impact assessments (PIAs) are used by ministries and public bodies to review the level of privacy risk to a system, project, program, or activity. This step-by-step review process ensures government protects the personal information collected or used in accordance with the privacy requirements outlined in FOIPPA.
- Conducting a PIA helps protect privacy and builds public trust by ensuring government is collecting, using and storing personal information appropriately.

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) Conducted

Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) Conducted	
Fiscal Year	PIAs Conducted
2016/17	654
2017/18	648
2018/19	896
2019/20	1,171
2020/21	972
2021/22	1,056
2022/23	945

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe ADM

CIRMO

Government Financial
Information

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Improving Response and Processing Time for
Freedom of Information Requests

Revised: Date of last revision, January 17, 2024

Key Messages:

- My Ministry is committed to improving the Freedom of Information (FOI) system so people in B.C. have timely access to the information they need.
- This includes individuals who are requesting access to their own personal information such as child in care files, disability benefits files and income assistance files.
- When it comes to improving our response times, this is complex work that takes time.
- For example, improving our FOI system includes resolving a backlog of complex, difficult files - frequently those of a personal or sensitive nature.
- We have already made progress on improving timeliness this year and are on track to close 84 per cent of requests on time in 2023/24, an increase from 78 per cent in 2022/23.
- As well, we have continued focus on reducing the backlog, closing 38 per cent of overdue files.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Why do we have a backlog?

- FOI requests have become increasingly complex year over year. This is reflected in the average number of pages processed in response to each request, which has doubled since 2018/2019.
- Despite this growth in complexity, government closed a record 2.5 million pages in FY2022/23.
- The increase in complexity and volume, at a time government was focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and other states of emergency, resulted in a backlog and increased processing times.

What are we doing about it?

- The improvements we have made to the FOI system have freed up resources to focus on the backlog which government has reduced by 38 per cent.
- Even while focusing on reducing the backlog, processing days for the average request remained low. If we exclude files that were open for a year or more, in 2022/23 government responded on average within 38 days.
- Government has continued to improve the response time for all requests this past fiscal year, moving from 85 processing days, on average, to 60 days so far this year.
- We are going to continue to look at how we can make further improvements to get people the information they need.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- The Ministry has committed over \$7.7 million, over multiple years, to improve the FOI process to manage the large volume of FOI requests the Province receives annually, resulting in faster, more secure delivery.
- The FOI Modernization Project is to improve business processes across government. For example, a new online platform that all ministries access (instead of each ministry having their own) to process requests, and new software automatically deletes duplicated documents, is saving time.
- We are working to reduce the backlog of overdue requests by focusing staff resources on the most overdue files.
- We are also working with ministries to make more records proactively available to the public without an FOI request.

Questions and Answers:

1) What steps have you taken to improve timeliness of FOI responses?

- We've committed \$7.7 million to improve FOI systems. Government has been hard at work to improve the system and help people get their records faster.
- We've increased the number of staff processing requests for personal information to the Ministry of Children and Family Development to 20.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services

Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- This backlog contains larger, more complex files – and frequently those of a personal or sensitive nature.
- We are focused on closing the oldest and largest files in the backlog, processing nearly 1 million pages of backlog material this fiscal year to date, prioritizing those who have been waiting the longest.
- My ministry is exploring new technologies to make responding to FOI requests more efficient and secure.

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe

ADM

CIRMO

Government Financial
Information

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Digital Archives

Revised: Date of last revision, January 26, 2024

Key Messages:

- The *Information Management Act* (IMA) establishes a digital archive to preserve and make available government's digital records of permanent value.
- The digital archives will exist in parallel with the BC Archives held at Royal BC Museum which archives physical records.
- The digital archive will be a secure repository documenting historical facts and decisions.
- The digital archive will provide access to our documentary history and allow British Columbians to understand its past, to continue the path to reconciliation and to look to the future.
- The digital archives are a key component of our work to digitize government records and implement a digital service, increasing efficiency and access.
- The digital archives will preserve records as evidence in perpetuity, thus preventing electronic degradation, hardware and software obsolescence and reducing the risk of harm from natural and human-caused disasters.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Questions and Answers:

1) When will the Digital Archives be operational?

- CIRMO has done considerable research on modern approaches, standards, and technology for creating a successful "trusted digital repository," and has completed key planning and requirements documentation.
- Next steps include establishing a digital repository and identifying pilot projects with ministries.

2) What is happening to these historically important records now?

- Physical records of permanent historical value continue to be transferred to the BC Archives at the Royal BC Museum.
- Digital records of permanent historical value remain in the custody of ministries at this time.
- Government's records management policies and practices direct that these records be fully retained (not destroyed).

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe	ADM	CIRMO	Government Financial Information
Mary LaBoucane	ED, Executive Director, Information Management Innovation	CIRMO	250-812-2083

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Digital Identity and Trust

Revised: Date of last revision, January 15, 2024

Key Messages:

- Canadians increasingly expect convenient and immediate access to digital services. At the same time, cyberattacks are increasing dramatically, and new digital tools are needed to help combat these threats.
- Research shows that Canadians expect governments to take the lead in protecting personal information in the digital world.
- Digital credentials and trust services reduce fraud, increase people's online confidence, and streamline and simplify service delivery.
- Trust in digital services is a continuing priority for B.C.
- B.C. attended the third Ministers' Symposium on Digital Trust and Cybersecurity in September, hosted by the Ontario Government. The symposium reiterated the commitment to collaboration on digital trust to provide seamless service delivery for all Canadians across all jurisdictions.
- B.C. continues to be a leader in digital trust and is working with other Canadian governments to develop interoperable digital credentials and the infrastructure to use them for the benefit of all Canadians.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- **We are united in the goal of empowering people and businesses to participate confidently and securely in the digital world.**

Questions and Answers:

1) Why are we investing more in digital trust and digital identity solutions? Don't we already have existing solutions that work?

- B.C. has been delivering digital identity services to British Columbians for over 20 years. However, the demand from Canadians to do more impactful digital interactions, like applying for a mortgage, is increasing.
- Cybersecurity threats are getting more sophisticated, and we must evolve to combat them. We also need digital identities that work in both the public and private sector, so that the digital economy can benefit.
- Our new digital credentials and trust services leverage our foundational identity services to make those interactions possible.
- We are leveraging past investments in digital identity solutions, such as the BC Services Card, to propel this work forward. The new "Person Credential" is based on the BC Services Card and allows people to prove online they are who they say they are, with a high level of assurance.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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- Other credentials being issued today allow people to prove they're a lawyer, or a business owner.
- And they can do this by presenting data from different credentials in their digital wallet, all in one simple step, in a way that's privacy-preserving and secure.

2) Will all British Columbians be required to have a digital credential at some point?

- There are no plans to require digital credentials.
- Not everyone has the means or the desire to go digital, and we will maintain alternative ways of accessing government services or communicating with the government.

3) Why did you release a BC Wallet app? Why not use existing solutions like Apple Wallet?

- The BC Wallet was developed to ensure that we can be confident that public users and government's security, privacy, and usability needs are met.
- All our code is open-source and available for both public and private sectors to leverage.

Contact:

Jillian Carruthers Senior Executive Director CIRMO 250 216-8493

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Freedom of Information Application Fee

Revised: Date of last revision, March 5, 2024

Key Messages:

- B.C. is committed to providing timely and helpful FOI services to the people of British Columbia.
- People requesting their own personal information pay no fee at all, and Indigenous Governing Entities are not required to pay an application fee.
- The \$10 fee for non-personal FOI requests is in line with fees charged in other jurisdictions in Canada.
- Since the introduction of the application fee, the Ministry has been monitoring its impact.
- In January of 2023, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) released a report on the application fee.
- As the Commissioner noted in his report, members of the public continued to submit high volumes of requests, even after the fee was introduced.
- While the fee does not appear to pose a barrier to making an FOI request, we will continue to monitor its impact and make informed improvements to our services.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Reduction in the Number of FOI General Requests:

- **The reduction of non-personal requests can be strongly attributed to two high-volume requestors, who, prior to the introduction of the application fee, made a significant number of requests.**
- **For example, a single media applicant who previously made 76 per cent of media requests now makes 21 per cent of media requests.**
- **In addition, ministries published over 4500 proactive disclosures in FY 2022/23, including summaries of briefing notes, calendars and contracts. This means applicants (including media and political party applicants) no longer need to make an FOI request to access this information.**
- **I recently issued two new mandatory Proactive Disclosure Directives for:**
 - **Monthly summaries of briefing notes provided to deputy ministers; and**
 - **Monthly summaries of briefing notes provided to Ministers of State.**
- **This brings the total number of mandatory Proactive Disclosure Directives to 17.**
- **FOI requests made by individuals continue to be consistent with previous years.**

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Questions and Answers:

1. Will you implement the five recommendations made in the OIPC's application fee report?

- I want to thank the Information and Privacy Commissioner for his report.
- We have implemented all of the report's recommendations. The recommendations are as follows:
 1. The BC Government should establish a policy to address the collection of fees where they transfer requests to other public bodies outside of provincial government.
 2. Public bodies that administer an application fee for general records should clearly inform applicants without delay when a fee applies
 3. A public body must ensure the time limit to respond is not suspended when they have failed to notify the applicant of the requirement to pay the fee.
 4. Public bodies that administer an application fee should have multiple fee payment options available to ensure expediency and accessibility for all applicants. This should include an option that permits an applicant to maintain anonymity.

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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5. Public bodies that administer an application fee should establish a policy outlining the circumstances for when they will charge, or refund the fee.

- For the most part, the B.C. government was already doing the things the report recommends. There were only a few areas where the OIPC recommended additional measures for the B.C. Government.
- We have since implemented those practices and are fully compliant with the five recommendations made in the Access Application Fee 6 Month Review Report.
- Our aim is to continually improve the FOI system in B.C. to ensure people receive information as quickly as possible.

2. What conclusions do you draw from the OIPC's report?

- The OIPC's report supports some of our own findings, as we've noted in our FOIPPA Annual Reports for 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- As the OIPC observed, individual applicants – the second-largest group of users of the FOI system – continued to submit high volumes of requests even after the fee was introduced.

3. Will you scrap the FOI application fee?

- We will continue to apply the fee for non-personal requests.
- The application fee for non-personal requests is modest at only \$10 and is in line with other jurisdictions.

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- While the fee does not appear to pose a barrier to making an FOI request, we will continue to monitor its impact and make informed improvements to our services.

4. Doesn't asking people to pay a \$10 fee for public information go against your claim to be an open and transparent government?

- The fee is in line with what other jurisdictions charge.
- People requesting their own personal information continue to pay no fee at all.
- Indigenous governing entities are not required to pay an application fee.
- With the implementation of the fee, we have seen a reduction in broad, multi-ministry requests from a handful of high-volume requesters.
 - These requests have reduced in number from 2,223 in FY 2020/21 to 1,371 in FY 2021/22 (when the application fee was introduced) to **470** in FY 2022/23.
 - This trend suggests that applicants are making more targeted requests to specific ministries for the information they want, rather than submitting broad requests for the same information to many ministries.
- This reduction in cross government requests has freed up resources to focus on processing requests from individual

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members of the public, many of whom are waiting to receive their own personal information, rather than disproportionately serving one or two high-volume applicants.

- We are also able to put more resources into proactive disclosures to increase the amount of information that's made available to the public on an ongoing basis without an FOI request.

5. Political requests have dropped significantly. Isn't it clear that the fee is preventing political parties from accessing information?

- The decrease of political party requests began in the quarters preceding the application fee and has now stabilized.
- Political parties used to submit FOI requests for records that are now routinely released through proactive disclosure, for example, ministers' calendars, lists of briefing notes, lists of contract awards.
- So far, this fiscal year, requests from political parties have accounted for 24 per cent of non-personal requests received, which indicates political parties have continued to actively file FOI requests. This is a return to a fiscal year 2016-17 baseline when political parties similarly accounted for 26 per cent of requests.

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6. Media requests have dropped significantly. Isn't it clear that the fee is preventing reporters from accessing information?

- Media have continued to submit a substantial volume of requests. It does not appear that the fee is preventing media from accessing the FOI system.
- A large reduction in media requests can be attributed to one applicant, who previously represented upwards of 76 per cent of all media requests. This applicant has now reduced their volume to approximately 21 per cent of all media requests.

Contact:

Rhianna Begley	Executive Director, Information Access Operations	CIRMO	778 698-5851
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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Personal Information Protection Act

Revised: Date of last revision January 12, 2024

Key Messages:

- Protecting the privacy rights of British Columbians is important.
- It is also important that people know there are rules and guidelines that protect their personal information.
- The *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) sets rules for how businesses, non-profits, political parties, and other organizations operating in B.C. handle personal information.
- If someone has a complaint about how an organization has handled their personal information, they can contact the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC).

If asked about federal changes:

- In June 2022, the federal government introduced Bill C-27 to amend their private-sector privacy law, the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*.
- The Bill is currently being considered at committee stage.
- B.C. will continue to monitor the progress of Bill C-27 and look for opportunities to harmonize with federal legislation, where possible.

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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If asked about modernizing PIPA or the PIPA Special Committee:

- The Special Committee to review PIPA completed its review and published its report on December 6, 2021.
- A key recommendation of the committee was to ensure alignment and harmonization with the changing federal, provincial, and international privacy landscape.
- It is a requirement that B.C.'s PIPA remains "substantially similar" to the federal legislation and we are monitoring progress of changes to that law to ensure PIPA is harmonized.

Questions and Answers:

1) What is the purpose of PIPA?

- It establishes rules for how private organizations must handle personal information. It balances an individual's right to safeguard their information and the organization's need to collect, use, or disclose personal information for appropriate purposes.

2) When was PIPA last updated?

- Government has not made substantial changes to the Act since it was first implemented in 2004.

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3) Does PIPA need to remain substantially similar to the federal act?

- The federal *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA) sets national requirements for privacy in the private sector.
- The federal government has deemed PIPA to be substantially similar to PIPEDA, meaning that PIPEDA does not apply to personal information collected, used, and disclosed entirely within British Columbia.

4) Recent and previous Special Committees of the Legislative Assembly reviewing PIPA have made several recommendations. What have you done to address these recommendations?

- Previous Special Committees reviewed PIPA in 2008, 2015 and most recently in 2021.
- The 2021 Special Committee made 34 recommendations, with 28 related to PIPA.
 - Items not directly related to PIPA include recommendations for the OIPC to take actions and for government to develop legislation for managing health information in BC, and to complete a review of the *Strata Property Act* for issues of potential conflict or confusion with the disclosure requirements of PIPA.
- Government is conducting an in-depth review of these recommendations.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe ADM CIRMO

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2023/24 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner
(OIPC) Recent Reports, Orders and Recommendations

Revised: Date of last revision, February 09, 2024

Key Messages:

- The Information and Privacy Commissioner provides independent oversight and enforcement of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA) and the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA).
- We appreciate the work the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner has undertaken over the last year.
 - *If asked about a specific joint resolution, issue, investigation or report, please refer to the questions and answers below.*

Questions and Answers:

1) Joint Resolution: Access to Government Information

- In October 2023, federal, provincial, and territorial privacy commissioners published a joint resolution about enhancing Access to Information.
- The resolution had multiple parts but generally called on governments to improve information management, remove barriers to access, and foster an improved culture of transparency.

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services

Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- [See note on 2023 Federal Joint Resolution Facilitating Canadians Access to Government Records for further information.]

2) Joint Resolution: Employee Privacy

- In October 2023, federal, provincial, and territorial privacy commissioners published a joint resolution about employee privacy.
- The resolution had multiple parts but generally called for laws and policies around employee privacy to be updated now that many more people work from home.
- Electronic monitoring of employee activities was highlighted as a particular concern.
- In British Columbia, PIPA regulates what employers can do with employee personal information.

3) Joint Resolution: Children's Privacy

- In October 2023, federal, provincial, and territorial privacy commissioners published a joint resolution about privacy for young people.
- The resolution had multiple parts but generally called for the privacy interests of young people to be prioritized over commercial interests.
- Government takes children's safety seriously and continuously looks for opportunities to enhance their privacy while online.

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2023/24 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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- We are currently collaborating across government to develop solutions that will work for B.C. and align with federal and international models.
- We will continue engaging with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner as we move forward with this important work.

4) Recommendations: Artificial Intelligence

- In December 2023, federal, provincial, and territorial privacy commissioners published a set of principles for the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- At the same time, the BC Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ombudsperson, and Human Rights Commissioner sent a joint letter to Minister Beare. The letter urged BC to make (unspecified) legislative changes to address the emergence of generative AI.
- In June 2022, the federal government introduced Canada's first artificial intelligence legislation. If enacted it will establish Canada-wide rules for the use of artificial intelligence.
- [See Artificial Intelligence note for further information.]
- We will continue to monitor the progress of the federal law and assess what needs to be done in B.C.

2023/24 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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5) Joint Investigation: ChatGPT

- In May 2023, the privacy commissioners for B.C., Alberta, Quebec, and Canada launched a joint investigation into ChatGPT.
- The investigation will focus on whether meaningful consent has been obtained, and whether the use of personal information is reasonable.
- The investigation is ongoing. No updates have been shared since the announcement.
- It would not be appropriate for the ministry to comment on a commissioner's investigation that's still ongoing.

6) Joint Investigation: TikTok

- In February 2023, the privacy commissioners for B.C., Alberta, Quebec, and Canada launched a joint investigation into TikTok.
- The investigation will focus on whether meaningful consent has been obtained, and whether the use of personal information is reasonable.
- The investigation is ongoing. No updates have been shared since the announcement.
- It would not be appropriate for the ministry to comment on a commissioner's investigation that's still ongoing.

2023/24 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

7) Investigation Report: FOI Application Fee Administration

- In January 2023, the OIPC released a report investigating the implementation of the FOI application fee and its effect on request volumes.
- The report encouraged public bodies to clearly define and communicate their practices for application fees, and to offer a variety of fee payment options.
- The report did not draw any clear conclusions about the effect of the fee on request volumes.
- [See note on FOI Fee Impacts for further information.]

8) Investigation Report: Provincial Public Health Information System

- In December 2022, the OIPC released a report investigating security protections in place for the Provincial Public Health Information System, also known as Panorama.
- Panorama is administered by the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA).
- The report recommended that the PHSA add more resources to proactively monitor for breaches, suspicious activity, software updates, and emerging cybersecurity threats.
- A six-month follow up report was issued in September 2023. It found that the PHSA had made significant progress towards implementing the commissioner's recommendations.

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- The PHSA is responsible for the management of Panorama and I am pleased that they have acted quickly to address the commissioner's recommendations.

9) Investigation Report: Use of Facial Recognition by Canadian Tire stores

- In April 2023, the OIPC issued an investigation report into the use of facial recognition technology (FRT) in certain Canadian Tire stores. The commissioner's report found that the use of FRT by Canadian Tire was not legal.
- Canadian Tire stopped using FRT in its stores as soon as it learned about the commissioner's investigation.
- B.C.'s privacy laws create strong protections for the privacy of British Columbians. I am pleased that the commissioner was able to investigate and address the inappropriate use of facial recognition technology in the province.

10) Special Report: FOI Timeliness

- The OIPC has conducted a review of the timeliness of government responses to FOI requests covering fiscal years 2020/21 to 2022/23.
- These are routine reports – the OIPC has conducted timeliness reviews every 2-3 years since 2009 with the most recent published in September 2020.
- The report covers the timeframe when government was focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, and other states of

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2023/24 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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emergency. The report does not include government's FOI performance from this current fiscal year.

- Government is working hard to improve its FOI system and services. That is why we've dedicated time and resources to FOI and have already seen improvement in timeliness this fiscal year. We are on track to close 84 per cent of requests on time for 2023/24.
- While we are making steady progress in improving timeliness, we'll be reviewing the report's six recommendations in detail before responding to the commissioner.

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe Assistant Deputy CIRMO
Minister

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Special Committee to Review FOIPPA Recommendations

Revised: Date of last revision, January 10, 2024

Key Messages:

- My ministry is committed to improving the freedom of information (FOI) system so people in B.C. have timely access to information they need.
- We are dedicated to ensuring the freedom of information and privacy law in B.C. keeps pace with emerging technologies and enhances privacy protection – that's why the work of the Special Committees continues to be important.
- The 2021 amendments to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA) were informed by many recommendations made by past committees – as well as feedback gathered through consultations over the course of three years.
- Recommendations by privacy experts, including the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) and Special Committee, are integral to our work.
- The 34 recommendations made by the Special Committee as part of their June 2022 *FIPPA for the Future* report remain under consideration as we continue to look for opportunities to improve and modernize access to information and privacy protection in B.C.

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Questions and Answers:

1) What progress has government made on the 34 recommendations from the 2022 Special Committee report?

- Government continues to look for opportunities to improve and modernize access to information and privacy protection in B.C.
- For example, in alignment with recommendation 12 to modernize the freedom of information system, we have committed over \$7.7 million in a multi-year project to modernize and improve the FOI system across government to ensure people get the information they need, faster.
- We are also committed to the practice of proactive disclosure and will continue to work to identify other categories of records that may be appropriate for proactive release.
- In fact, since 2020 we've increased proactive disclosures by 88 per cent. And this past week I have added two more categories now increasing the disclosures by 113%
- And we continue to look for opportunities to align our work with the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

2) Why did Government proceed with the 2021 amendments before the Special Committee completed its review?

- Prior to the 2021 amendments, FOIPPA had not been updated since 2011, which meant that not one, but two sets of Special Committee recommendations had gone unaddressed.

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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- Updating the Act when we did, allowed the new Special Committee to focus on forward-looking issues with an Act that is more modern and responsive to the needs of people in B.C.

3) What previous Special Committee recommendations were addressed when FOIPPA was amended in 2021?

- The amendments made to FOIPPA in 2021 addressed several of the Special Committee recommendations, including:
 - Making it mandatory to report a privacy breach,
 - Making it an offence to destroy documents to evade access,
 - Making it mandatory to put in place a privacy management program,
 - Increasing maximum penalties for privacy-related offences, and
 - Enabling the addition of subsidiary corporations and other entities as public bodies.
- Other recommendations were addressed through policy and those related to records management were satisfied through the introduction of the *Information Management Act*.

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe Assistant Deputy Minister CIRMO

Government Financial
Information

This material will be proactively released.



Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

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Page 213 of 631 to/à Page 246 of 631

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PO Box 9038, Stn. Prov. Govt.
Victoria, BC V8W 9A4
Telephone: 250.387.5629
Toll Free in BC: 1.800.663.7867
Email: info@oipc.bc.ca
 [@BCInfoPrivacy](https://twitter.com/BCInfoPrivacy)

oipc.bc.ca





Ministry of
Citizens' Services

Report on the administration of
the Freedom of Information and
Protection of Privacy Act
2022/23

October 5, 2023

The Honourable Raj Chouhan
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Suite 207 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased to present this report on the administration of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA) for the 2022/23 fiscal year. Outlined in this report are steps my ministry has taken in support of my 2020 and 2022 mandate letter direction:

- Continue to improve government's public sector data security and privacy practices.
- Continue to provide British Columbians with timely access to information and ensure the system provides public accountability.
- Continue to improve access to information rules to provide greater public accountability.

There has been considerable progress made in 2022/23 to improve accountability and transparency through increased privacy protections and proactive disclosure of information. This year, the Ministry continued to onboard ministries to its new, modernized FOI system, and invest in best-in-class digital tools. Two new legislated requirements for all public bodies were implemented to improve privacy practices across the public sector. A new directive was published requiring the monthly proactive disclosure of Parliamentary Secretaries' calendars.

I would like to express my appreciation to all the dedicated people across the public service who are committed to access to information and the protection of privacy.

Sincerely,



Honourable Lisa Beare
Minister of Citizens' Services

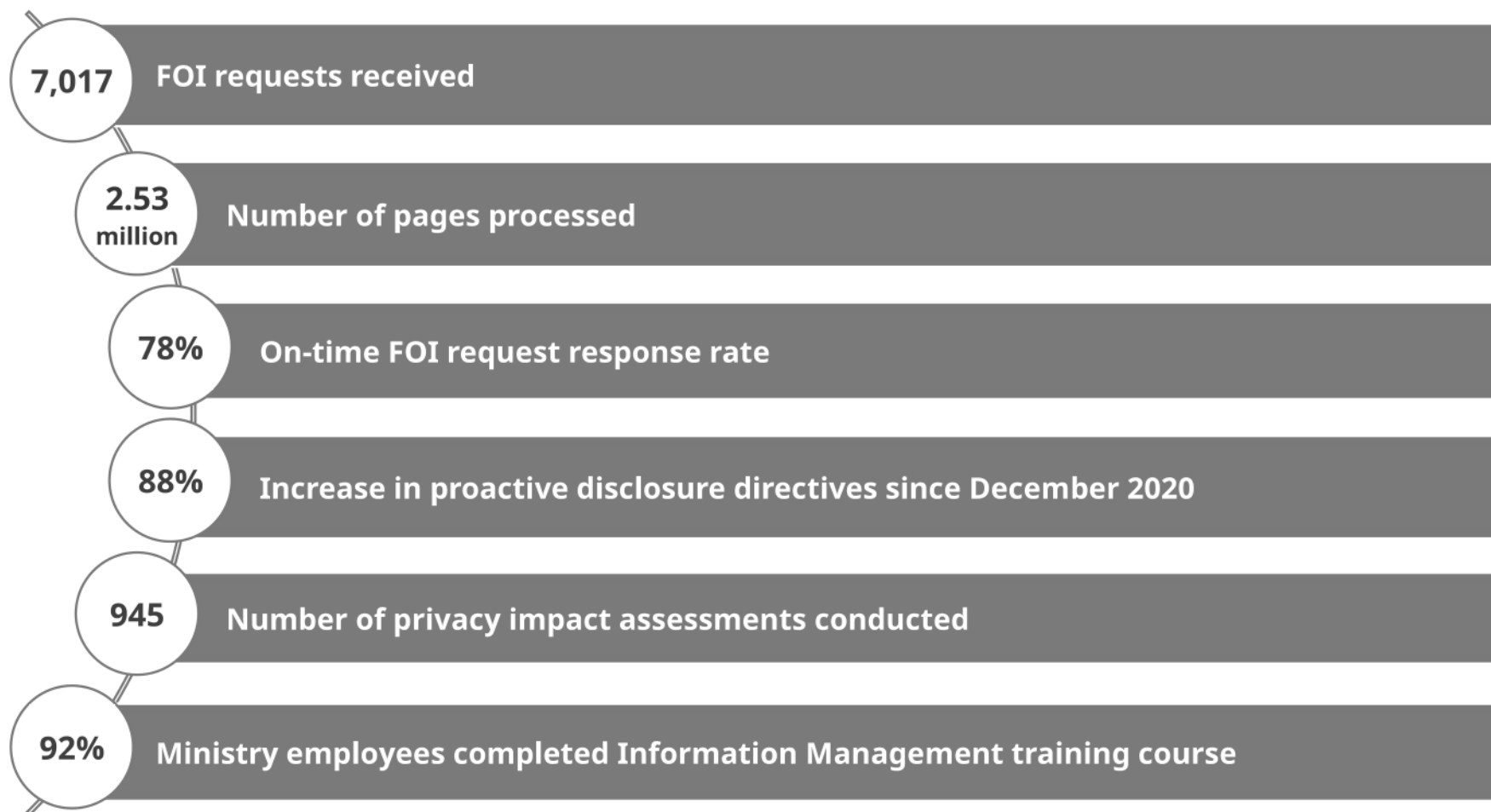
pc: Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

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2022/23 FOIPPA Overview

Enacted in 1993, B.C.'s *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA) balances government's accountability to the public through access to information with a person's right to privacy.



Information Access

FOIPPA makes government open and transparent by providing a mechanism for the public to request information about themselves (personal requests) and government business (general requests) from the more than 2,900 public bodies in B.C. FOIPPA also sets a requirement for public bodies to make information available to the public through proactive disclosure.

2022/23 Highlights

FOI Modernization Project Update

Since fiscal year 2020/21, the Ministry has committed over \$5.5M to modernize and improve FOI services to ministries. This project has resulted in the introduction of new technology and business processes to support the large volume of requests received each year while also improving the applicant experience by making processes more transparent and easier to use.

In the 2022/23 fiscal year, the Ministry continued to onboard ministries to the new, modernized system. By fiscal year end, twelve ministries had been onboarded, with plans to onboard all remaining ministries by Winter 2023.

An evaluation of the systems' effectiveness, conducted at the end of a pilot involving five ministries, showed the following benefits:

- » The average staff time to process an FOI request decreased by almost two hours.
- » The average days to respond to an FOI request decreased by almost seven days.
- » The average on-time rate increased by 16%.

MCFD FOI Service Delivery Project

In the 2021/22 annual report, the Ministry reported on a partnership established with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to improve service delivery for personal FOI requests in that ministry. This collaboration has resulted in a 90% increase in pages processed in fiscal year 2022/23 for MCFD personal requests in comparison to fiscal year 2020/21.

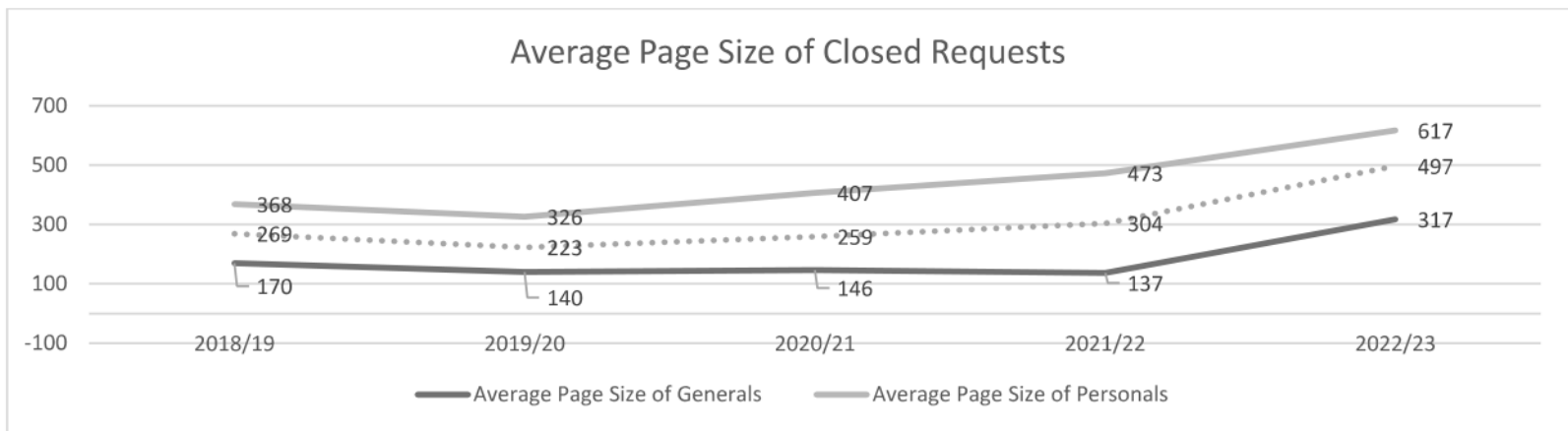
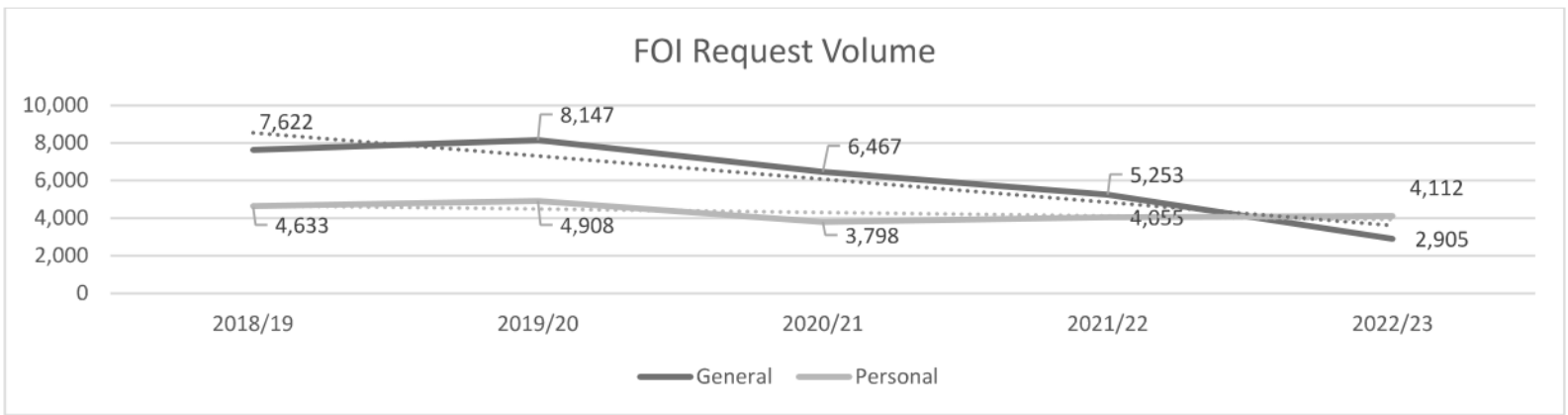
Based on a successful first year, the two ministries have agreed to a further two years of continued collaboration and dedicated financial support for the purpose of processing these complex overdue requests.

Key Figures

FOI Requests by Year

An FOI request is a formal process to request records from a public body. Personal requests are when an individual requests their own information held by government such as child-in-care records, income assistance records, or B.C. government staff employment records. General requests are requests for all other government information such as briefing notes or reports.

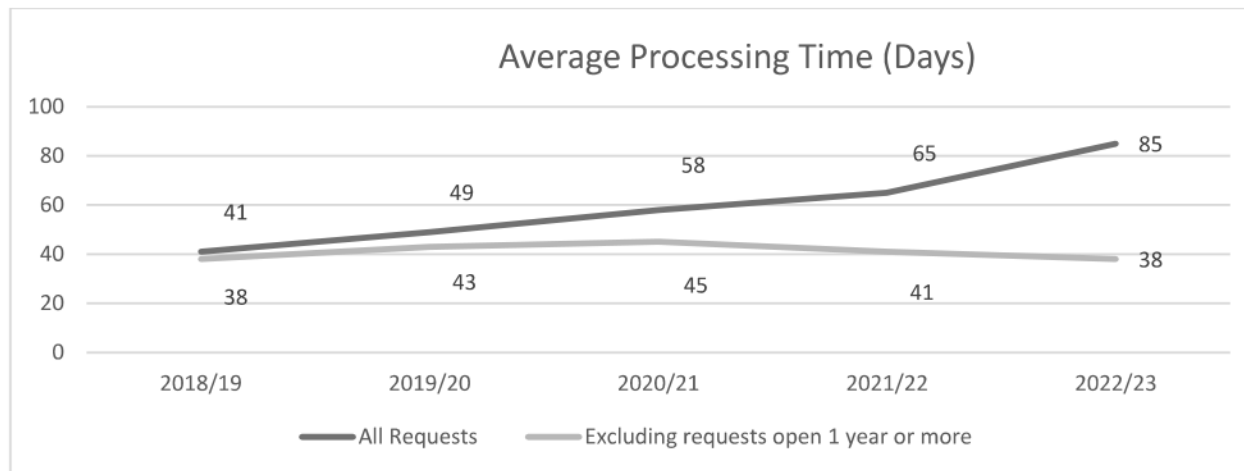
Since fiscal year 2018/19, the average volume of personal requests has remained relatively steady with a slight increase in this past year. However, over the same period, the average number of pages under review in a personal FOI request has grown to now represent on average 617 pages for one request. Where we see some year over year variance is in the general requests, with a peak in 2019/20 of 8,147 requests.



Processing Time

FOIPPA states that a public body must respond to an applicant who makes an FOI request within 30 business days. The Act provides for the ability to extend this time if certain conditions apply, or with the permission of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The percentage of on-time responses to FOI requests is an essential way for government to measure the effectiveness of its access to information program. This measure provides an indication of government's annual performance in responding to FOI requests within the timelines defined in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

The processing time for responding to an FOI request in 2022/23 was significantly impacted by government's ongoing commitment to respond to and close overdue requests, in particular those most overdue. This approach resulted in a lower overall timeliness rate of 78%. The backlog has now been reduced by 38% and expectations are that the on-time response rate in 2023/24 will improve as a result. Because the processing time for responding to a request is not calculated until a request is closed, a focus on closing overdue requests will negatively affect the on-time and average processing days response rate for that fiscal year. When complex requests that were overdue by a year or more (approximately 8% of files closed in 2022/2023) are excluded from the total number of requests closed, government responded on time to 84% of FOI requests. When requests that were open for a year or more are excluded from the total number of requests closed, the average time to process a request was 38 days.

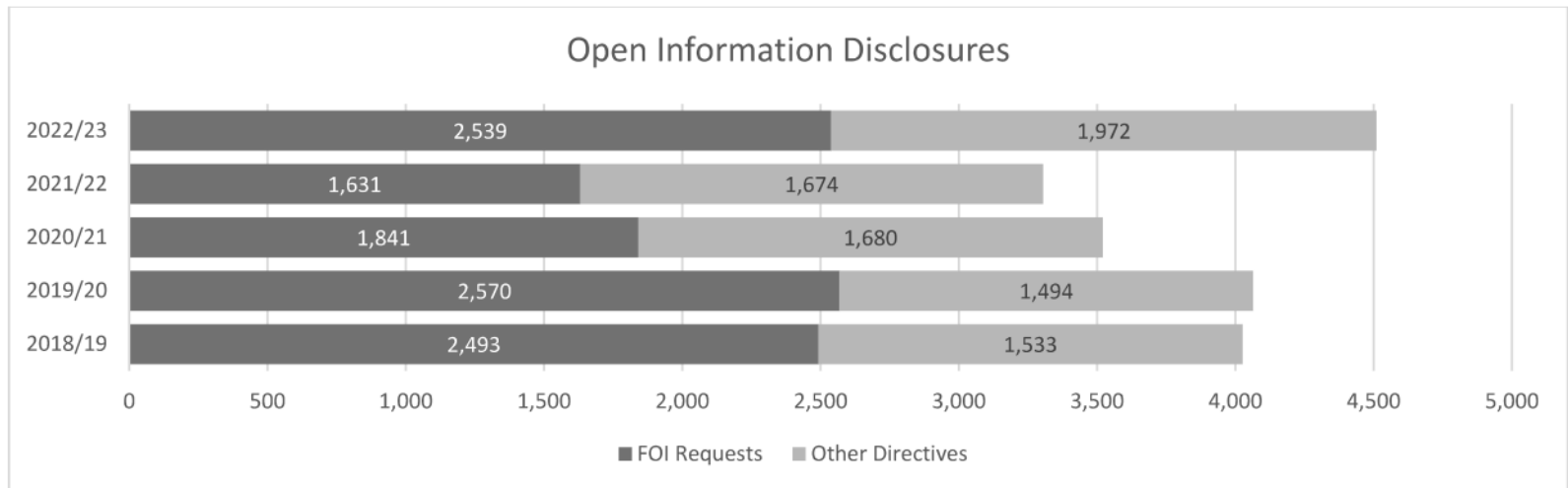


Proactive Disclosure

Proactive disclosure is the release of government information to the public without a formal FOI request. The practice of disclosing information on a proactive basis is an important way for government to improve access to information, transparency, and accountability. There have been 88% more proactive disclosure directives¹ since December 2020. As well, government continues to review opportunities to make high-value records available to the public through Open Information.

Section 71.1 of FOIPPA allows the Minister responsible for the Act to establish categories of records that ministries must proactively disclose and to issue directions that detail those disclosures. To date, over nineteen thousand disclosures have been made under these directives. One new ministerial directive came into effect March 27th, 2023: Disclosure of Parliamentary Secretaries' Calendars, which brings the total to 15 categories of records that are proactively released to the public. Examples of other categories include Ministers' and Corporate Transition Binders as well as Estimates Notes.

Ministries disclose a great deal of information through online repositories and interactive tools such as [BC Data Catalogue](#), [DriveBC](#), and the [BC Economic Atlas](#). The more than over 3,500 data sets on the BC Data Catalogue increase transparency of government services.



¹ There are two categories of proactive disclosure directives: FOI Requests and Other Directives.

Privacy Protection

The government of B.C. is responsible for protecting privacy and personal information whenever citizens interact with us. The Privacy Management and Accountability Policy (PMAP) supports ministry compliance with FOIPPA and strengthens government's ability to protect the privacy of individuals' personal information. It includes direction on the Province's privacy management program, including privacy management accountabilities, as well as privacy tools, agreements, and processes that support privacy protection in ministries.

There are 15 Ministry Privacy Officers (MPOs) who are accountable for privacy management programs within each ministry or sector. MPOs have the necessary knowledge and experience with ministry portfolios and privacy expertise to support robust, tailored programs for their ministries, which focus on supporting employee education and awareness, delivering sound privacy advice, and designing privacy into new ministry initiatives.

2022/23 Highlights

Mandatory Breach Reporting and Privacy Management Programs

On February 1st, 2023, government introduced regulations and directions for all public bodies, relating to:

- » Mandatory breach reporting requirements; and
- » Developing a privacy management program.

Where a privacy breach could result in significant harm to affected individuals, the mandatory breach regulation requires that affected individuals and the Information and Privacy Commissioner receive timely notification. Privacy breach notifications must provide sufficient detail to:

- » Inform the affected individuals and the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the steps that the public body has taken to reduce any risk of harm;
- » Allow the affected individual to take action to mitigate any possible harm;
- » Enable the Information and Privacy Commissioner to determine if the appropriate course of action has been taken by the public body to mitigate harm to individuals.

The new requirement related to developing a privacy management program, ensures that public bodies will develop these programs.

The regulations and directions were developed in consultation with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Digital Privacy Impact Assessment

Conducting Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) is a requirement for all public bodies when developing or changing an existing enactment, system, project, program or activity. The PIA process ensures personal information is collected, used, and disclosed in accordance with the privacy protections outlined in FOIPPA.

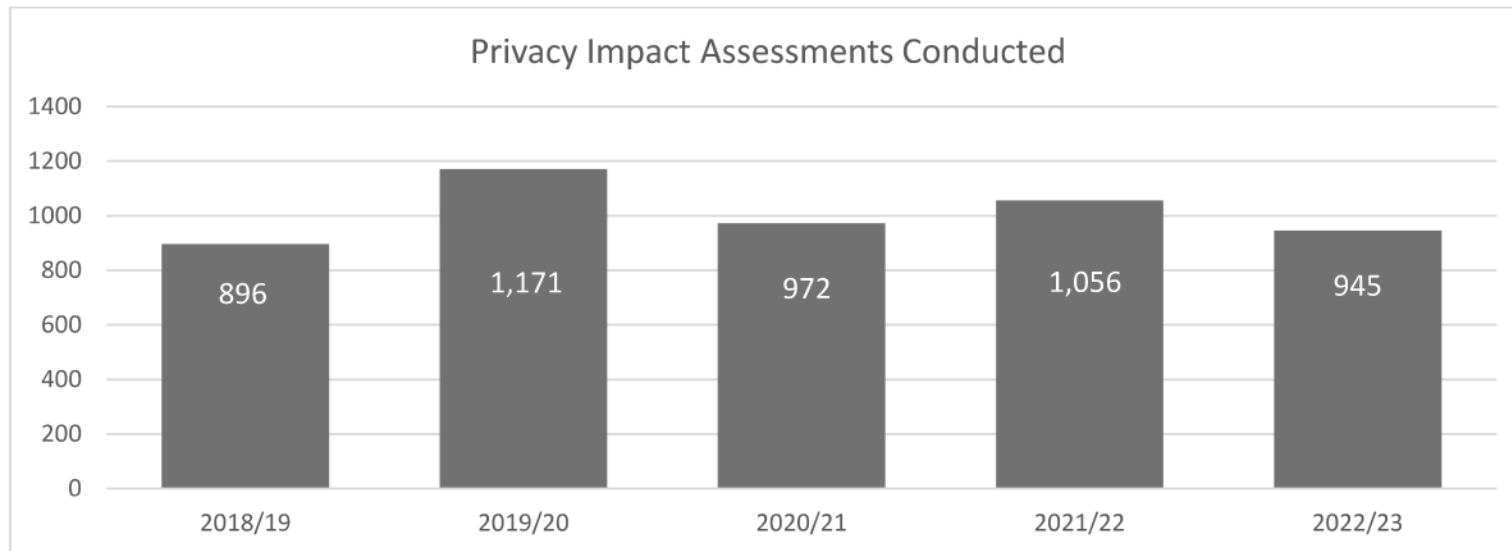
In September 2022, the Ministry established the Digital Privacy Impact Assessment (DPIA) project team to improve the PIA process through the development of a modern digital application, which will replace the current paper-based PIA. The DPIA will make the PIA process more efficient and streamlined for ministries, and enhance privacy protections for British Columbians' personal information.

Key Figures

Privacy Impact Assessments

Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) are used by public bodies to review the level of privacy risk to a system, project, program or activity. This step by step review process ensures government protects the personal information collected or used in accordance with the privacy requirements outlined in FOIPPA

Completing a PIA helps protect privacy and builds public trust by being clear about what information a ministry is handling; who has access to it; and how it is stored.

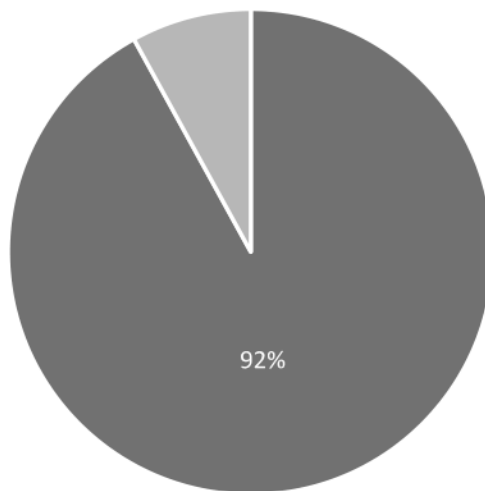


Privacy Protection Training

Ensuring government employees are trained in information management is critical to managing and protecting the personal information entrusted to government. This is done, in part, by requiring every government employee to take a comprehensive information management course which focuses on privacy, information security, access, and records management (Information Management 117 – IM117).

Employees are required to complete IM117 every two years. Ninety two percent of B.C. government employees completed IM117.

92% of ministry employees completed IM 117



Looking Ahead

FOI Modernization Project

In the coming year, the Ministry's FOI Modernization project team will continue to enhance the new cross-government FOI system used by ministries to manage government FOI requests. By the Winter of 2023, all ministries are expected to be onboarded to the new system.

Additional enhancements underway include:

- » Improvements that speed up the review and redaction of records by the Ministry's FOI analysts, with streamlined processes and faster application performance to save time and cost.
- » Migration of historical requests into the new platform.

Addition of Two New Public Bodies to FOIPPA

In June of 2023, the BC Association of Chiefs of Police and BC Association of Municipal Chiefs of Police were brought under the coverage of the Act. This addressed a longstanding recommendation of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Going forward, both bodies will be required to respond to freedom of information requests and follow the same robust privacy rules as other public bodies, including conducting privacy impact assessments and establishing privacy management programs.

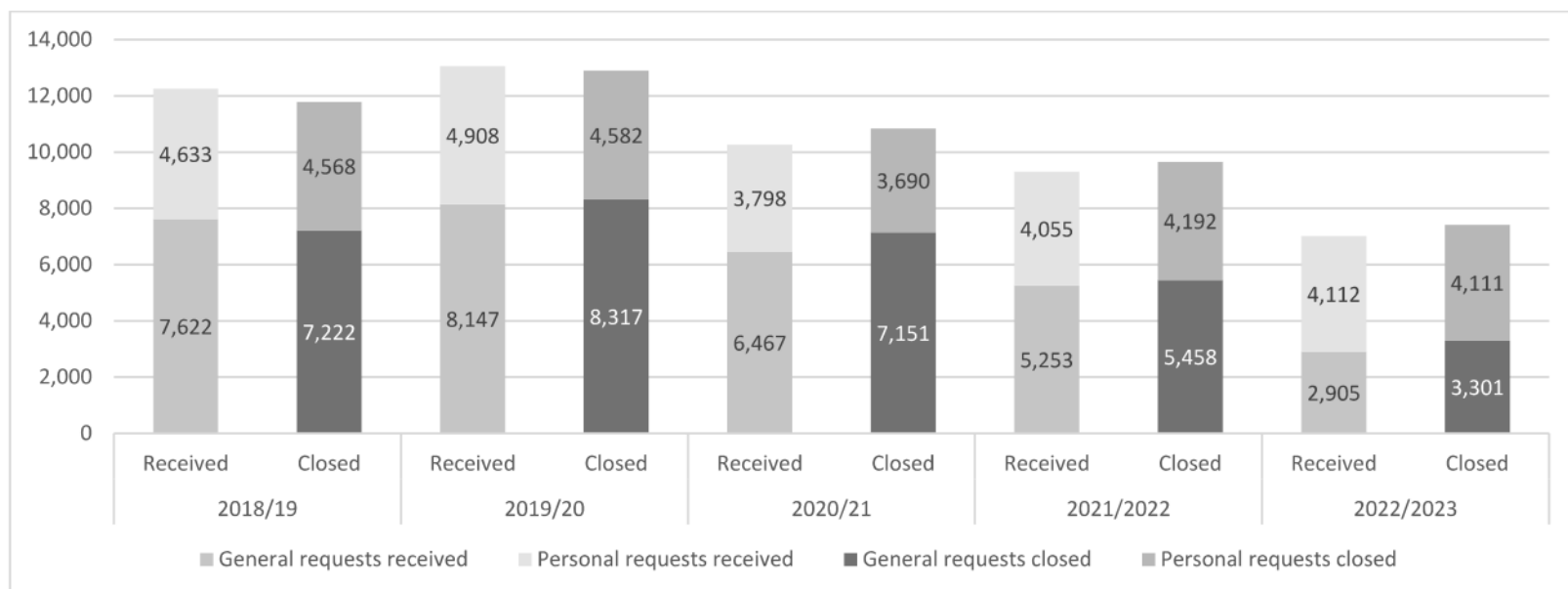


Appendix – FOIPPA by the numbers

Freedom of Information

FOI Requests

Personal requests are when an individual requests access to their own information held by government such as child-in-care records, income assistance records, B.C. government staff employment records, etc. General requests are requests for all other government information such as briefing notes, and reports.



Cross-government Requests

A request is considered “cross-government” when it is made to four or more ministries. Cross-government requests can have significant impacts on timeliness as searches must be conducted across multiple ministries.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Total	3,129	2,933	2,323	1,371	470*

* Recent FOI trends have seen applicants directing more targeted requests to specific ministries, rather than submitting broad requests to many ministries.

Requests Received by Ministry	2021/22		2022/23	
	General	Personal	General	Personal
Agriculture & Food*	187	0	70	8
Attorney General	220	80	160	99
Children & Family Development	160	2,058	82	2,020
Citizens' Services	191	0	81	4
Education & Child Care*	164	15	110	25
Emergency Management and Climate Readiness*	-	-	62	1
Energy, Mines & Low Carbon Innovation	145	1	109	-
Environment & Climate Change Strategy	243	6	268	10
Finance	610	307	272	416
Forests*	499	13	292	8
Health	919	39	254	41
Housing*	-	-	28	1
Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation	94	1	36	1
Jobs, Economic Recovery, Development & Innovation	139	0	58	-
Labour	116	12	56	8
Mental Health & Addictions	67	0	49	-
Municipal Affairs	96	15	46	7
Office of the Premier	289	5	133	1
Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills*	137	2	50	2
Public Safety & Solicitor General	462	662	226	616
Social Development & Poverty Reduction	95	832	53	830
Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport	103	3	64	3
Transportation & Infrastructure	304	4	201	6
Water, Land and Resource Stewardship*	13	0	145	5
TOTAL	5,253	4,055	2,905	4,112

* Ministry change in December 2022

General Information Requests by Applicant Type

	Individual	Political Party	Law Firm	Researcher	Media	Interest Group	Business	Other Public Body	Other Gov't	Indigenous Governing Entity*
2018/19	819	4,922	300	107	795	278	311	18	72	--
2019/20	946	5,836	213	68	536	195	302	17	34	--
2020/21	896	4,033	214	87	760	210	238	12	17	--
2021/22	1429	2,091	243	91	908	163	286	15	19	8
2022/23	809	909	243	92	286	239	291	9	11	16

* Indigenous governing entity applicant type was introduced in November 2021. Total reported for 2021/2022 reflects 4 months of reporting.

Personal Information Requests by Applicant Type

	Individual	Political Party	Law Firm	Researcher	Media	Interest Group	Business	Other Public Body	Other Gov't	Indigenous Governing Entity*
2018/19	3,607	0	913	0	5	81	7	11	9	--
2019/20	3,873	1	916	0	4	60	10	19	25	--
2020/21	2,854	0	864	0	0	52	7	19	2	--
2021/22	3,089	0	873	0	1	52	9	20	5	6
2022/23	2,956	0	1,046	0	0	88	7	10	2	3

* Indigenous governing entity applicant type was introduced in November 2021. Total reported for 2021/2022 reflects 4 months of reporting.

Proactive Disclosures*

	FOI Requests	Other Directives*	Total
2018/19	2,493	1,533	4,026
2019/20	2,570	1,494	4,064
2020/21	1,841	1,680	3,521
2021/22	1,631	1,674	3,305
2022/23	2,539	1,972	4,511
TOTAL	11,074	8,353	19,427

*Previously titled Open Information Disclosures.

** In total, fifteen directives have been issued.

Disposition Releases

This category identifies the extent to which information formally requested under FOI laws is released to an applicant. This includes FOI responses where ministries respond by providing full disclosure; providing partial disclosure; indicating records may be routinely releasable; indicating records are in another ministry or organization; transferring the request; or deferring access as the information is to be publicly released within 60 days).

	Full disclosure	Partial Disclosure	Routinely Releasable	Information to be published within 60 days	Records in another Min/Org	Transferred
2018/19	1,291	5,567	46	7	213	141
2019/20	1,313	6,096	70	10	53	148
2020/21	1,056	5,114	85	28	60	138
2021/22	1,035	5,465	96	3	161	222
2022/23	727	3,978	62	4	199	163

Disposition Refusals

Applicants can be denied access to all or part of a record in accordance with mandatory or discretionary exceptions as outlined in FOIPPA. In some circumstances, the mere knowledge that a record exists will cause harm to law enforcement or will unreasonably invade the personal privacy of a third party. Therefore, the head of a public body may refuse to confirm or deny the existence of such a record, as outlined in [section 8\(2\)\(a\) and \(b\)](#).

	Access Denied	Refuse to Confirm or Deny
2018/19	327	79
2019/20	271	59
2020/21	234	77
2021/22	182	62
2022/23	150	57

Disposition Other

This category includes requests that have been abandoned by the applicant, requests withdrawn by the applicant, requests to correct information, requests that have been cancelled, requests that are out of scope of the Act, and requests that result in no responsive records.

	Abandoned	Withdrawn	Correction	Cancelled	Outside the Scope of the Act	No Responsive Records Exist / Located
2018/19	898	1,375	0	35	8	1,802
2019/20	1,199	480	3	64	25	3,108
2020/21	1,437	336	0	34	44	2,198
2021/22	739	330	0	31	12	1,311
2022/23	894	308	0	29	7	834

Fees for Access to Information

Section 75 of FOIPPA enables a public body to charge a fee for some aspects of an FOI request.

Processing fees may include:

- Locating and retrieving the record;
- Producing the record;
- Preparing the record for disclosure, except for time spent severing information from the record;
- Shipping and handling the record;
- Providing a copy of the record.

Starting in November 2021, a \$10 application fee was applied to all general FOI requests. The fee must be paid before the request will be processed and applies to every ministry public body included in a request. Indigenous governing entities are exempt from paying application fees.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Total FOI Requests	12,255	13,055	10,265	9,308	7,017
General Requests	7,622	8,147	6,467	5,253	2,905
Number of Requests Where Processing Fees Paid	151	145	144	143	171
Sum of Processing Fees Paid (nearest thousand)	\$63,000	\$44,000	\$51,000	\$50,000	\$53,000
Percent of General Requests Where Processing Fees Paid	2.08%	1.74%	2.01%	2.70%	5.88%
Average Processing Fee for all FOI Requests	\$5	\$3	\$5	\$5	\$7.50
\$10 application fees paid for General Requests	--	--	--	\$11,950*	\$26,930

* A \$10 application fee for general requests was introduced in November 2021. The value reported for 2021/22 reflects 4 months of reporting.

Privacy Protection

Privacy Impact Assessments Conducted

Operational PIAs are conducted on any new or updated system, project, program, or activity. Legislative or Regulatory PIAs (LPIA/RPIA) are conducted on new or amended legislation or regulations.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Operational PIA	695	946	740	823	707
LPIA/RPIA	201	225	232	233	238
Total PIA	896	1,171	972	1,056	945

Privacy Breaches

The Information Incident Management Policy requires that any BC Public Service employee who becomes aware of an actual or suspected information incident must report the incident to the Ministry of Citizens' Services. Investigators assess each report and determine whether an investigation is warranted. An investigation may not be conducted if it can be quickly determined that no violation of FOIPPA has occurred or if the incident is outside of the Ministry's investigative mandate or jurisdiction. Where an investigation is conducted, investigators seek to determine whether a violation of FOIPPA has occurred and, if so, what factors may have contributed to the incident or privacy breach.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Reported (Privacy Breaches & Complaints)	2,013	2,234	1,978	2,487	3,114
Investigations Conducted	1,736	1,889	1,621	2,043	2,556
Violations Occurred	1,615	1,405	1,455	1,897	2,439
Instances Where Breach Notification Required (% of violations)	87 (5.4%)	115 (8.2%)	124 (8.5%)	100 (5.3%)	116 (4.8%)

Privacy Breach Volume by Tier

Investigators assess and categorize each incident using a five-tier system, in which the assigned tier reflects the potential risk of harm, the sensitivity of the information involved, and the type of investigative and/or other activities needed to respond.

- » Tier 1 and 2: Minor to moderate incidents involving personal or confidential information with negligible risk of harm to individuals or government.
- » Tier 3: Moderate/major incidents (including complaints) involving sensitive personal or confidential information, inappropriate or wilful conduct and potential jeopardy for the individuals involved. Usually require more in-depth investigations.
- » Tier 4: Major, complex and/or high-profile incidents involving highly sensitive personal or confidential information, may impact public confidence in a ministry or government, notification likely due to high potential for a significant risk of harm.
- » Tier 5: Major incidents requiring the involvement of an external investigator due to an actual or perceived conflict of interest for the Investigations Unit, or its executive.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Tier 1	1,384	1,519	1,369	1,825	2,128
Tier 2	255	241	247	254	349
Tier 3	97	129	113	84	109
Tier 4	0	0	0	0	0
Tier 5	0	0	0	0	0

Volume of Complaints Received

An individual can make a complaint about the handling of their personal information by government and is entitled to receive a response. Government investigates privacy complaints to determine whether they can be substantiated and, where they are substantiated, issues recommendations to program areas as to how to strengthen their information management practices and prevent similar privacy breaches from occurring in the future.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Complaints Reported	62	74	71	57	52
Complaints Substantiated	43	24	29	27	28

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: 2023 Federal Joint Resolution Facilitating Canadians' Access to Government Records

Revised: Date of last revision, January 22, 2024

Key Messages:

- **B.C. is committed to openness, transparency, and responsible management of government information.**
- **Government continues to make an increasing number of high-value records available through its open information channels.**
- **Last fiscal year over 4,500 proactive disclosures were published, contributing to over 19,000 disclosures in the past 5 years.**
- **All employees are trained in the legislative requirements and best practices related to access to information and records management, as well as information security and privacy.**
- **Government's information management law requires all ministries to have the appropriate combination of people, processes and technology in place to ensure that government information is created, held, transferred, archived and disposed of in accordance with the Act.**

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Questions and Answers:

1) What is government doing to expand / promote proactive disclosure of information by ministries?

- B.C. is committed to openness, transparency, and responsible management of government information.
- Last fiscal year over 4,500 mandatory proactive disclosures were published, contributing to over 19,000 disclosures in the past 5 years.
- There are 15 Ministerial Directives that require the regular, mandatory proactive disclosure of government information
These disclosures include:
 - Calendars (including those of Ministers' and Deputy Ministers' and Parliamentary Secretaries')
 - Summaries of Ministerial Briefing Notes
 - Estimates Notes and Corporate and Ministers' Transition Binders
 - Ministers' Travel Receipts and Deputy Ministers' Travel Expense Summaries
 - Summaries of Contracts (including Directly Awarded, Contracts with Values over \$10,000 CAD, and Alternative Service Delivery Contracts).

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services

Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- FOI related (Summaries of Open and Closed FOI requests, and Records Released in Response to an FOI Request)
- Purchasing Card and Business Transaction Account Expenditures
- Gaming Grants Paid to Community Organizations
- This is in addition to other proactively disclosed information such as information in the BC Data Catalogue.
- The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA) sets a requirement for public bodies to make information available to the public via proactive disclosure.
- Government continues to make an increasing number of high-value records available through its open information channels.

2) What is government doing to ensure proper creation and retention/ preservation of government information?

- B.C. has a robust Information Management framework, guided by the *Information Management Act* (IMA).
- The IMA requires all ministries to have the appropriate combination of people, processes and technology in place to ensure that government information is created, held, transferred, archived and disposed of in accordance with the Act.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- We are committed to creating and maintaining the records that are needed to support openness and transparency; document facts and decisions; and contribute to the Province's historical record for future generations.

3) What is government doing to recognize the unique barriers to access impacting Indigenous peoples and groups and how is government actively working to advance reconciliation by respecting principles of data sovereignty and ensuring full and timely access to records that belong to them?

- Under Action 3.14 of the Declaration Act Action Plan, B.C. will advance the collection and use of disaggregated demographic data, guided by a distinctions-based approach to Indigenous data sovereignty and self-determination.
- B.C. is supporting the establishment of a First Nations-governed and mandated regional data governance centre in alignment with the First Nations Data Governance Strategy.
- B.C. has recently signed a protocol agreement with B.C.'s First Nations Leadership Council to advance work supporting Indigenous data sovereignty including work under the Anti-Racism Data Act.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

4) What has the government done to invest in information management governance systems and programs to ensure they are adequately resourced and that disposition schedules are adhered to by all?

- B.C. has a robust Information Management framework, guided by the *Information Management Act* (IMA).
- The IMA requires all ministries to have the appropriate combination of people, processes and technology in place to ensure that government information is created, held, transferred, archived and disposed of in accordance with the Act.
- B.C. has an Information Management Advisory Committee that reviews all information disposition schedules, amendments and recommends their approval to the Chief Records Officer.

5) How is the government investing in adequate training and education to ensure all staff understand their roles and responsibilities regarding records retention and preservation?

- All BC Public Service employees, including political staff, are required to complete a mandatory information management course once every two years.
- This course provides employees with training on the legislative requirements and best practices related to access to

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information and records management, as well as information security and privacy.

- This course is refreshed regularly to ensure the content reflects legislative and policy requirements as well as best practice.
- In addition to the mandatory course that all employees are required to complete, employees have access to a number of self-directed, interactive, eLearning courses on a variety of information and records management subjects, including records retention and preservation.

6) Considering that vulnerable groups or individuals may be disproportionately affected by costs imposed on the right of access, how is government ensuring that application fees are not a barrier to access?

- Fees are never charged when a person is requesting personal information about themselves.
- Indigenous governing entities are exempt from paying an application fee.
- FOI applications from individuals have remained high and consistent with prior years.

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7) How is government supporting the transfer of information of historical importance to their respective archival organization on a timely basis, declassifying documents as appropriate before transfer in order to assist their handling and review, enable their preservation and facilitate public access to Canada's documentary heritage?

- B.C. has a strong partnership between the Government Records team and the Royal BC Museum (BC Archives) to manage the transfer of government information for archiving.
- We're establishing a Digital Archive to complement existing holdings.

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe ADM

CIRMO

Government Financial
Information

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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Appendix A

2023 Federal Joint Resolution Facilitating Canadians' Access to Government Records

Therefore, Canada's Information Commissioners and Ombuds urge their respective governments to modernize legislation, policies and information management practices in order to uphold the following principles:

1. The culture of public bodies/institutions must be founded on the fundamental principle that information under their control belongs to the people they serve, and should be made available by default, including through proactive disclosure, recognizing that the use of exemptions or exclusions from the right of access should be limited and specific.
2. Public bodies/institutions must ensure the creation and retention of easily accessible records, regardless of medium, in order to document historical facts and decisions, preserve the truth for posterity, and counter the rising sources of misinformation or disinformation;
3. Public bodies/institutions must recognize the unique barriers to access impacting Indigenous peoples and groups and actively work to advance reconciliation by respecting principles of data sovereignty and ensuring full and timely access to records that belong to them;
4. Public bodies/institutions must prioritize good information management by investing in robust information management governance systems and programs, adequately resourcing their

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information management units, and empowering them to ensure that disposition schedules are adhered to by all;

5. Public bodies/institutions must further invest in adequate training and education to ensure all public service staff, including political staff conducting government business, understand their roles and responsibilities regarding records retention and preservation;
6. Public bodies/institutions must ensure that the use of application fees, where applicable, do not interfere with an individual's right to access government records, considering that vulnerable groups or individuals may be disproportionately affected by costs imposed on the right of access; and,
7. Public bodies/institutions must transfer information of historical importance to their respective archival organization on a timely basis, declassifying documents as appropriate before transfer in order to assist their handling and review, enable their preservation and facilitate public access to Canada's documentary heritage.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Artificial Intelligence (OCIO-ES, GDX, BCDS supporting)

Revised: Date of last revision, January 14, 2024

Key Messages:

- **Government sees many opportunities to improve service delivery for British Columbians with the thoughtful use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).**
- **However, we need to carefully consider the risks and challenges that AI poses such as privacy and security concerns, data bias, fairness, and human rights issues.**
- **Government is working on a policy framework to ensure the responsible and trustworthy use of AI to address these concerns.**
- **We are starting with guiding AI principles that incorporate known best practices and are aligned with the governments of Ontario and Canada.**
- **B.C. public servants commented on the draft principles from October 17, 2023, to January 31, 2024.**
- **We are planning further consultation with interested parties including the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Human Rights Commissioner, and Ombudsperson over the coming months.**

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- **The draft AI principles are:**
 - **Transparent and explainable**
 - **Accountable and responsible**
 - **Human-centric**
 - **Ethical and fair**
 - **Reliable and safe**
- **We are committed to ensuring transparency and accountability when it comes to the use of AI.**

Questions and Answers:

1. Regulation of AI

- There are existing laws that apply to AI in specific contexts, including privacy, access to information, employment, human rights, and intellectual property law.
- The federal government has introduced Canada's first AI law (in Bill C-27) that, if passed, will establish Canada-wide rules for AI in the private sector.
- We are monitoring the progress of the federal bill, and related regulations, and will assess what needs to be done in B.C. as this work advances.

2. Use of AI tools in B.C. Government

- AI tools can range from the COVID-19 chatbot that helped people find information about COVID-19 on government's

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website, to decision support tools that help predict weather events and fire behaviours.

3. Interim Guidance on the use of generative AI

- Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, use algorithms to create various types of content from a simple prompt.
- In August 2023, the Government Chief Information Officer issued interim generative AI guidance for the B.C. public service to support responsible use of AI while a more robust AI policy framework is developed.
- The guidance applies to all B.C. public servants, and provides the following rules:
 - Prohibits employees from putting any confidential information, including personal information, into a third-party generative AI tool like ChatGPT, unless the tool is approved for government use.
 - Requires employees to review generative AI outputs to ensure they are factually accurate, complete, and up to date.
 - Requires employees to review and edit generative AI outputs to ensure that the language is inclusive, respectful, and in alignment with government style guides and other drafting standards.
 - Reminds employees that since generative AI tools do not provide sources for content, they should consider copyright or intellectual property issues before using the tools.

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4. What is your response to the Green Party's call to form an all-party AI task force?

- We are working on a policy framework to ensure the responsible and trustworthy use of AI within government.
- The federal government has introduced a bill on AI to regulate the private sector. The details will be implemented through regulation in consultation with provinces and the private sector.
- Once this work is underway, B.C. will be in a better situation to understand the potential impact.

5. Consultation with Information & Privacy Commissioner, Ombudsperson, Human Rights Commissioner

- We thank the Commissioners and Ombudsperson for their letter and support as we all work to ensure the responsible and trustworthy use of AI.
- As they noted, there are existing laws and policies that regulate the use of AI by public servants.
- Government is developing a responsible use of AI policy framework, including draft guiding principles.
- As work on the AI Framework progresses, we will consult with each of their offices.

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe

Assistant Deputy Minister

CIRMO

Government Financial
Information

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Facts and Figures - Procurement

Revised: Date of last revision, January 4, 2024

BC Bid

- The number of suppliers who are registered with BC Bid provides a measure for the breadth of small, medium, and large suppliers who do business with government in communities across British Columbia.

Fiscal	Forecast or Target	Actual
2019/20	4,800	6,816
2020/21	5,575	6,890
2021/22	5,800	6,108
2022/23	6,000	5,832
2023/24*	6,200	8,858 as of January 18, 2024
2024/25	6,400	-

*Note: The above numbers are for a portion of the current fiscal (missing two months of data).

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- Additional data points to be considered for BC Bid are:

Opportunities Posted in BC Bid¹

Fiscal	Number of Opportunities Posted in BC Bid by the Broader Public Sector	Number of Opportunities Posted in BC Bid by Ministries	Total number of Opportunities
16/17	6,780	2,057	8,837
17/18	7,402	2,407	9,809
18/19	7,428	2,697	10,125
19/20	7,537	2,529	10,066
20/21	6,819	2,622	9,441
21/22	7,687	2,472	10,159
22/23	7,666	2,750	10,416
23/24*	5,381	1,760	7,141

*Note: The above numbers are for a portion of the current fiscal (missing two months of data).

¹ Opportunity totals reflect most up-to-date data pulled from BC Bid on January 18th, 2024.

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Organizations that posted opportunities in BC Bid

Fiscal	Number of Broader Public Sector Organizations that posted opportunities in BC Bid	Number of Ministry Organizations that posted opportunities in BC Bid	Total number of Organizations that posted opportunities in BC Bid
16/17	384	32	416
17/18	397	34	431
18/19	394	33	427
19/20	385	33	418
20/21	388	34	422
21/22	404	34	438
22/23	383	33	416
23/24*	385	35	420

*Note: The above numbers are for a portion of the current fiscal (missing two months of data).

Discovery Days

- 21 Discovery Day Sessions have been held since January 2019.
- 371 vendors have registered to participate in Discovery Day sessions, with 240 vendors that have attended these sessions.
- 33 Requests for Information (RFI) have been posted through this program. For these 33 RFIs we have received 255 responses.
- 19 of the 33 RFIs have moved to full procurement projects.

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Digital Marketplace: Sprint, Code and Team With Us Services

- The Marketplace offers several procurement services to enable government to partner with high quality digital talent in the private sector.
- One service, Sprint With Us, offers companies opportunities to bid on contracts of up to \$5 million. These procurements take as little as 17 days from start to finish.
- Team With Us is a new service released in 2023 that allows business areas to rapidly partner with digital talent. Ten opportunities have been awarded since July 2023 valuing \$2.6 million.
- In 2023, 88 per cent of Code With Us and 50 per cent of Team With Us opportunities were awarded to small-to medium-sized tech companies.
- The Marketplace is growing with a projected 117 per cent increase in contract value being awarded in 2023/2024 compared to last fiscal.
- Issued more than 170 contracts to dozens of small- to medium-sized tech companies through the Sprint With Us and Code With Us programs.
- 33 contracts valued at \$17.6 million have been issued through Sprint With Us.
- 141 contracts valued at \$4.0 million have been issued through Code with Us.
- The total amount offered through both Sprint With Us and Team With Us is \$21.6 million.

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- The programs reduce the cost for businesses submitting a contract proposal to government from about \$15,000-\$25,000 to \$1,000-\$2,000.
- As of January 2024, 209 opportunities with a total value of \$54 million have been awarded via Digital Marketplace Services.

Supporting Government's Response to COVID-19

Health PPE Portal

- As of January 11, 2024, 46,784 orders from 6,175 physicians have gone through the Health PPE Portal.

Government Laws and Acts

April 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023:

- 387 regulations and 335 statutes published to BC Laws
- OIC: 734 published to BC Laws
- MO: 437 published to BC Laws
- Special regulations: 52 (authority other than OIC or MO)
- Acts Ministers: 5 Historical Archivals and 1 current collection
- Bills: 51 Third Reading Bills passed, processed, and published.
- Gazette I: 38 Editions processed for Print and published to BC Laws
 - 4448 Print Editions Distributed
- Gazette II: 16 Editions processed for Print and published to BC Laws
 - 451 Print Editions Distributed
- Proclamations: 238 published to BC Laws
- Corporate Registries: 52 editions yearly
- Bulletins: 46 editions yearly
- Resumes: 50 editions yearly

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Support to Citizens

In 2023, the Product Distribution Centre:

- Shipped 500,000+ parcels
- Procured and distributed 3,500 active SKU's
- Managed 12,600+ clients
- Managed 161+ active contracts
- PDC Call Centre received and actioned 40,000 calls and 30,000 emails from direct clients

The services provided were for medically fragile citizens with a direct at home care supply of medical devices and products.

Mail Payment and Document Processing

- Serving 36 programs across four ministries, the volumes processed over the past calendar year are as follows:
 - o Keyed 63,845 Returns
 - o Created 858,246 Images
 - o Processed 175,535 payments totaling \$8 billion
 - o Processed 392,607 pieces of return mail
 - o Managed 484 boxes for off-site storage

Contact:

Teri Spaven	ADM	Procurement and Supply Division	Government Financial Information
Genevieve Lambert	Chief Digital Officer	OCIO Digital Office	250-217-6296

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2024/25 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Indigenous Procurement Initiative

Revised: Date of last revision, January 16, 2024

Key Messages:

- Formed as part of B.C.'s Procurement Strategy in 2018, the Indigenous Procurement Initiative addresses the legacy of systemic exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from economic opportunities.
- In 2019, with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, we engaged Indigenous partners for their input on developing a cross-government approach to Indigenous procurement.
- The 2020 'Report on What We Heard' presented Indigenous experiences and provided recommendations to increase Indigenous Peoples' participation in government procurement opportunities.
- In 2022, government created an External Advisory Committee with representation from First Nation, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities.
- In partnership with the Province, the Committee is co-developing a plan to:
 - Support government's commitment to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.
 - Implement a coordinated, cross-government approach to procurement with Indigenous Peoples.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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- **Create and refine procurement policies, practices, and programs that are supportive of Indigenous businesses, organizations, communities, and individuals so they can participate in government procurement opportunities.**

Questions and Answers:

1) How many Indigenous businesses does the Province currently contract with?

- The Province is working with the External Advisory Committee to determine if the Province should have a definition of "Indigenous business", and, if so, what that definition should be, how it should be used, and how a list of Indigenous businesses could be gathered and maintained.
- As a result, it is not currently possible to know how many Indigenous businesses have contracts with the Province.

2) When will Indigenous businesses start seeing visible changes?

- The inclusion of Indigenous voices and perspectives are vital to determining what changes the Province should make and how to make those changes in a culturally appropriate way.
- The External Advisory Committee meets regularly and is co-developing a plan of recommended short, medium, and long-term actions to address gaps and barriers.

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- The timeline for implementing solutions will depend on the actions prioritized by the Committee.

3) What else has government done to support more Indigenous people in B.C. to participate in government procurement opportunities?

- In support of that goal, we have:
 - Created a dedicated office and hired staff to assist the committee and this work.
 - Rolled out Indigenous cultural competency training and content to B.C. Government staff who deliver procurement and contract management.
 - Established a streamlined process for ministries to contract with qualified Indigenous facilitators to help ensure government's engagements with Indigenous Peoples are culturally safe.
 - Published the Indigenous Procurement Initiative 'Report on What We Heard' which reflects the input received from more than 300 Indigenous partners, organizations, community representatives, business owners, and others around the province on building a procurement approach that will better benefit Indigenous businesses and communities throughout B.C.

Contact:

Geoff Haines Executive Director Procurement and 250-507-8739
Supply Division

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: 2024 Procurement Plan

Revised: Date of last revision, January 17, 2024

Key Messages:

- Earlier this year, the Ministry of Citizens' Services released the British Columbia Procurement Plan.
- The Plan lays out the framework for government's procurement practices to responsibly help drive change towards a more equitable, accessible, and sustainable economy for everyone.
- Using procurement as a strategic lever for change, the Plan unlocks a brighter future for everyone through the three strategic missions:
 - Leverage purchasing power – use government's purchasing power to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, improve social and environmental outcomes, and promote innovation.
 - Increase supplier access – make it easier for vendors of all sizes to work with government.
 - Build capacity – build greater capacity for procurement in the BC Public Service through enhanced career planning, training, and support.

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- **Building on the Procurement Strategy (2018) and Strategy Update (2020), with a renewed focus on:**
 - **Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples;**
 - **Tackling climate change;**
 - **Supporting jobs and training;**
 - **Ensuring public safety; and**
 - **Keeping services affordable.**
- **The Plan includes actions for all government buyers, along with Ministry of Citizens' Services initiatives to support them and the success of the Plan.**
- **The Plan continues to ensure that all ministries conduct open, fair, and transparent processes when purchasing goods and services.**

If asked how new contracts align with the Plan

- **Ministries are required to apply the Social Impact Purchasing Guidelines when purchasing services under \$75,000 and goods under \$10,000.**
- **Ministries are required to apply the Environmentally Responsible Procurement Guidelines when purchasing goods to minimize negative impacts on the environment.**
- **Government buyers are also required to evaluate all other purchases with the lens of adding social, Indigenous,**

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environmental, or economic criteria to ensure best overall outcomes for all British Columbians.

- My ministry is involved in the planning processes for several large re-procurements and advising how to apply these principles under the strategy.
- We continue to talk with stakeholders to ensure B.C.'s procurement approach works for businesses and organizations.

Social Impact Procurement Guidelines (see attachment)

- Government purchasing can have a range of impacts beyond generating revenue for government suppliers and getting the Province what it needs to provide services for people.
- Social impact purchasing allows government to do more for people and communities when it spends public dollars.
- Social impact purchasing is about re-evaluating how government thinks about value for money – that is, basing purchasing decisions on more than just cost.
- The Province's social-impact guidelines provide clarity on how government ministries can consider social value when purchasing services with a total value under \$75,000.
- For example, up to ^{Government}Financial of the score can be awarded to proponents that propose social-impact enhancements like skills training or new job opportunities for people who are underrepresented in the workforce.

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- **We are working to provide additional supports to increase opportunities for social procurement and for staff to implement social purchasing goals.**

Questions and Answers:

1) What is procurement?

- Procurement is the process by which government acquires goods, services, and construction from the vendor marketplace. It is a critical tool for the delivery of government services and fulfilling ministry mandate objectives.

2) How is procurement conducted in the B.C. Government?

- Canadian public-sector procurement must be fair, open, and transparent. These requirements are created by a legal framework that includes federal and provincial legislation, national and international trade agreements, and Canadian contract law and jurisprudence.
- All procurement opportunities are posted publicly on BC Bid, the government's online sourcing platform; vendors may submit tenders in response to posted procurement solicitations.

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3) What are the goals of the current procurement plan?

- The plan positions procurement as a strategic lever for change and aims to unlock a brighter future for everyone through the three strategic missions:
 - Leverage purchasing power - use government's purchasing power to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, improve social and environmental outcomes, and promote innovation.
 - Increase supplier access - make it easier for vendors of all sizes to work with government.
 - Build capacity - build greater capacity for procurement in the BC Public Service through enhanced career planning, training, and support.

4) What will the new plan accomplish?

- We have already begun to implement this revitalized vision for the future of procurement in B.C. What you can expect to see over the next 12 to 18 months includes:
 - A draft action plan from the External Advisory Committee to address barriers to Indigenous businesses.
 - A proposal for establishing a vendor engagement and support program.
 - Accessibility standards applied to all corporate

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solicitation templates.

- A pilot program to test plain language procurement and contract wording.
- A career path strategy for growing procurement talent within government.

5) How does the new Plan differ from the previous Strategy?

- The procurement plan addresses the impacts of public sector procurement on three key groups – suppliers, buyers, and the people of B.C.
- Three new missions, supported by a suite of actions to guide this work are aimed at:
 - Using government's purchasing power to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, improve social and environmental outcomes, and promote innovation.
 - Making it easier for vendors of all sizes to work with government.
 - Building greater capacity for procurement in the BC Public Service through enhanced career planning, training, and support.

6) What progress had you made on the previous strategy?

- After seeking the input and advice of Indigenous partners, an External Advisory Committee was formed in late 2022, and includes representation from First Nations, Métis, and

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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urban Indigenous communities, organizations, and businesses to provide advice and recommendations to the Province on increasing Indigenous People's participation in provincial procurement opportunities.

- Launched the BC Impact Procurement project, a multi-year pilot project that will test a broadened scope of government's social impact purchasing guidelines and guidelines for environmentally responsible procurement.
- The pilot project is intended to help inform the policies, standards, and guidance necessary to use purchasing power to improve social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic outcomes for British Columbians.
- Discovery Day sessions launched as part of Requests for Information, to allow companies to gain a better understanding of government's needs and perspectives, resulting in improved bids on future procurements. It also allows government to become more informed of the solutions available in the market.
- May 2022, launched the new, modernized BC Bid application with upgraded features and functions, including better search functions, easier navigation, and updated security.
- Trained procurement staff in Citizens' Services on how to put social impact principles into practice.
- Rolled out cultural competency training to B.C. Government employees who deliver procurement and contract

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management.

- The Province's online marketplace platform includes two programs, Code with Us and Sprint with Us, that have helped build an ecosystem of innovation and collaboration between technology entrepreneurs and government. Using the marketplace, ministries have procured 209 opportunities valued at \$55M.

7) You say that the Province spends billions of dollars on goods and services – what do you buy?

- Each year, the province spends billions of dollars on goods and services.
- Procurement is an integral part of public sector service delivery, supporting the provision of public services by all B.C. Government ministries.
- These purchases occur in every sector, and every ministry, and range from telecommunications to office products, to complex IT systems, to goods and services essential for wildfire and flood relief efforts.
- This does not include capital expenditures such as building new hospitals or schools.

8) What are the social impact procurement guidelines?

- Purchasing has a range of impacts beyond generating revenue for government suppliers and getting the Province what it needs to provide services for people.

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- Social impact purchasing allows us to do more for people and communities when we spend public dollars.
- The Province's social-impact guidelines provide clarity on how government ministries can consider social value when purchasing services with a total value under \$75,000.
- Social impact elements that may be considered, on a case-by-case basis in a procurement and measured through a contract, include supplier diversity and workforce development.
- This means creating opportunities for Indigenous Peoples, employment equity seeking groups, people with disabilities and offering apprenticeships, skills training and other developmental support to employees, contractors, or volunteers, including diverse supplier groups.

9) The current BC Procurement Plan and the previous Strategy talk about using procurement strategically to improve social and environmental outcomes. What does this mean and how are you measuring it?

- This is about making sure the money we are already spending on the goods, services, and IT that government needs are being spent in ways that meet our business needs, provide value, but also improve social and environmental outcomes.
- My ministry developed social and environmental guidelines to support ministries to embed these concepts into their

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procurements.

- Our procurement specialists are trained to put social procurement principles into practice, and we have rolled out cultural competency training to B.C. government employees who deliver procurement and contract management.
- The BC Impact Procurement pilot is intended to support measuring the use of purchasing power to improve social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic outcomes for British Columbians.
- I continue to meet with the vendor community to learn how we are doing. We are not there yet – there is more we can do.

Contact:

Geoff Haines	Executive Director	Procurement and Supply Division	250-507-8739
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British Columbia Procurement Plan 2024



Ministry of
Citizens' Services



Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the territories of First Nations around B.C. and are grateful to carry out our work on these lands. We acknowledge the rights, interests, priorities, and concerns of all Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), respecting and acknowledging their distinct cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments.

Minister's Message

Government procurement is a powerful tool to help deliver the services people count on, create jobs, and grow the economy so British Columbians can thrive and prosper.

The Province spends billions of dollars every year purchasing goods and services such as safety equipment for wildfire fighters, boots for sheriffs, and safety courses for bridge and road maintenance workers.

Our buying power stimulates employment across sectors, helps grow regional economies, and improves services for people in their local communities.

A key action of the B.C. Procurement Plan is to work in partnership with Indigenous communities so Indigenous businesses find it easier to participate in government procurement opportunities. Through collaboration, we established an External Advisory Committee to co-develop a plan to address gaps, barriers, and inequities that Indigenous vendors face. The Ministry of Citizens' Services has established a list that ministries can use to engage the services of qualified First Nations, Métis, or Inuit facilitators to help ministries plan, design, and facilitate culturally safe meetings and engagements with Indigenous Peoples.

Our work is on track to establish social impact guidelines for purchases across ministries over

\$75,000 in 2024. We are exploring ways that social impact can feature in future funding requests to ensure social procurement is a tool that uses purchasing power for social good by being inclusive of vendors in traditionally underrepresented groups.

We are also leading the fight against climate change through environmentally conscious procurements such as the CleanBC government fleet, which will improve access to zero emission vehicles and reduce greenhouse gas emissions forty per cent below 2010 levels by 2030.

The B.C. Procurement Plan removes barriers for small and medium-sized businesses and makes it easier for them to work with government. Since 2018,

B.C.'s procurement opportunities through the modernized BC Bid platform are more open, transparent, and collaborative. Improvements include better search functions and easier navigation, updated security and a reliable, modern experience for the public, buyers, and suppliers.

We know there is more work to do and at the Ministry of Citizens' Services, we have a committed procurement team dedicated to building a clear path forward using government procurement to build a StrongerBC.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Beare".

Honourable Lisa Beare
Minister of Citizens' Services



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Introduction

Each year, the government of British Columbia spends billions of dollars procuring goods and services to deliver on its priorities for the people and communities of B.C.¹. We spend this money using fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, open, and competitive procurement practices to ensure value for money and accountability.

We see opportunities to leverage government spending to address some of our biggest priorities, such as:

-  reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples,
-  tackling climate change,
-  supporting jobs and training,
-  ensuring public safety, and
-  keeping services affordable.

¹ Government applies an Environmental, Social and Governance Framework for Capital that guides the consideration of key government priorities through the development of public sector projects. More information can be found in the [BC ESG Summary Report](#). [British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits](#) is the Provincial Crown corporation providing the qualified skilled trades workforce for the construction of public infrastructure projects operating under the Community Benefits Agreement.



The decision-making process for every government purchase or procurement in British Columbia must prioritize the best interests of the people of B.C., local communities, local economies, and the environment.

The British Columbia Procurement Plan lays out the framework for our procurement practices to responsibly help drive change towards a more equitable, accessible, and sustainable economy for everyone.

This plan for the way government procures goods and services works within the existing legislation, policy, and trade agreements that regulate public procurement in B.C.

Additionally, through a decentralized procurement model, we rely on accountability and the procurement principles of fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, open, and competitive procurement practices to ensure value for money.



How We Got Here

In 2018, government released its first procurement plan, the Procurement Strategy, designed to improve procurement, realize value for money, and create benefits for communities.

This means using procurement intentionally to improve social and environmental outcomes and promote innovation; simplifying processes to make them more intuitive; supporting, growing and sustaining a community of suppliers; and enhancing training and support within the BC Public Service.

Since then, some major and profound events have occurred. We are still recovering from the disruption and far-reaching impact of the global pandemic, not to mention the effects of climate change – the heat dome, wildfires, and flooding.

For government, these events have only underscored the need, and accelerated our

work, to think about how we make purchasing decisions that consider the impacts and benefits for people, the environment, and the economy.

Since 2018, we have made progress to innovate and transform our purchasing processes to make it easier for vendors and government buyers to work with each other. Accomplishments and progress include:

- ▶ BC Bid – renewed the Province’s online marketplace for procuring goods and services.
- ▶ Indigenous Procurement Initiative – as a result of a province-wide engagement to identify ways to increase Indigenous participation in B.C. government procurement, established an External Advisory Committee to co-develop a plan to address gaps, barriers, and inequities that Indigenous vendors face.



- ▶ Launched Sprint With Us, Code With Us, and Team with Us – electronic process to quickly establish agile product development contracts with vendors of all sizes.
 - ▶ Social Purchasing Guidelines – developed guidelines for procurements under \$75,000 that support government’s social policy objectives.
 - ▶ Guidelines for Environmentally Responsible Procurement – published guidance on how to include environmentally responsible products and services as part of government purchasing decisions.
 - ▶ Feed BC – increased B.C. food and beverages in government and public institutions through activities, including procurement practices to build B.C. food demand, awareness, and connections, resulting in the growth of local food businesses, communities, and economies.
 - ▶ Clean BC Government Fleet – implemented innovative procurement practices to increase government access to zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) and charging services to contribute to reducing government’s Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 40% below 2010 levels, by 2030.
- The impact on provincial supply chains continues. The lesson from this difficult time is clear: to tackle the complex problems facing our province we must ensure every purchasing decision we make considers the impacts and benefits for people, the environment, and the economy.



Where We're Going

Looking ahead, and working collaboratively, we know there are opportunities to leverage government spending to address some of our biggest priorities, such as reconciliation, climate change, public safety, and economic growth. This new Procurement Plan builds on the base we have established together and reflects input from across the BC Public Service.

In developing this plan, the Ministry of Citizens' Services referred to the advice, considerations, and concerns from buyers and vendors. We

continue to work closely with public servants across government to better understand the challenges and identify opportunities to address those challenges. You will see this input reflected in the three missions, actions, and initiatives to be undertaken.

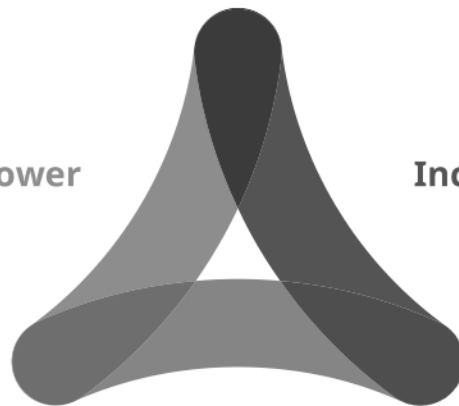
Together, through our purchasing decisions, we can obtain the best possible value for all British Columbians, advance important social and economic objectives and improve procurement.

The Missions

By using procurement as a strategic lever for change, this plan aligns with government priorities, including Stronger BC, CleanBC Roadmap to 2030, and implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

With the needs of the public, buyers, and suppliers in mind, we're making sure public dollars unlock a brighter future for everyone through the three strategic missions:

Mission 1:
Leverage purchasing power



Mission 2:
Increase supplier access

Mission 3:
Build capacity



Mission 1: Leverage purchasing power

Use government's purchasing power to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, improve social and environmental outcomes, and promote innovation.

Procurement can be a strategic lever that can contribute to achieving government priorities. By considering the impacts for people first, we can make strides towards government's reconciliation, social, and environmental goals. Prioritizing the positive impacts that can flow from government procurements, rather than the lowest price, will contribute to an equitable and sustainable economy with opportunity for everyone.

Government calls to action



Drive responsible sourcing.

By including principles-based criteria, almost every procurement is an opportunity to advance Indigenous, social, environmental, and economic outcomes. B.C. government buyers must:

- ▶ Apply the [Social Impact Purchasing Guidelines](#) when purchasing services under \$75,000. This may include seeking services from traditionally underrepresented groups.
- ▶ Apply the [Environmentally Responsible Procurement Guidelines](#) when purchasing goods to minimize negative impacts on the environment.
- ▶ Evaluate all other purchases with the lens of adding social, Indigenous, environmental, or economic criteria to ensure best overall outcomes for all British Columbians.



Leverage government's buying power.

Corporate supply arrangements provide opportunities for thousands of contracts on quicker timelines and with cost savings, resulting in better value for taxpayers. B.C. government buyers must:

- ▶ Use Corporate Supply Arrangements to leverage government's buying power and work with the Procurement and Supply Division to establish new ones where there is increased demand for specific services or goods



How we're supporting these actions:

The Ministry of Citizens' Services will:

- ▶ Continue to work with ministries to identify and support procurement processes for better social and environmental outcomes, including adding to the number of corporate supply arrangements available across government.
- ▶ Continue to work with the Indigenous Procurement Initiative's External Advisory Committee to co-develop a plan to identify and address gaps, barriers, and inequities faced by Indigenous vendors.
- ▶ Expand the availability of Indigenous-specific corporate supply arrangements across government.
- ▶ Support the advancement of social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic outcomes through the Impact Procurement Pilot program. Use learnings from the pilot program to create guidelines and resources for use across government.



Mission 2: Increase supplier access

Make it easier for vendors of all sizes to work with government.

The government of British Columbia remains committed to making it easier for vendors of all sizes and types to participate in provincial procurement opportunities. We must ensure that all vendors have equitable access to procurement opportunities and the resources they need to participate.

That means streamlining processes, working with the vendor community to provide education and assistance, and balancing the risks and rewards of doing business to incentivize innovation. We will continue to collaborate with B.C.'s resilient and diverse vendor community to ensure equitable access.

Government calls to action



Make it easier for vendors of all sizes and types to work with us.

When government embraces market-driven innovation, we open more doors to solutions with positive impacts on people and the environment. B.C. government buyers must:

- ▶ Engage with vendors through Requests for Information (RFI) and Discovery Day events to understand solutions available in the marketplace to government challenges.
- ▶ Inform the marketplace early of significant upcoming planned procurements, giving all potential suppliers adequate time to prepare the highest quality proposal.



Equitable access for all vendors.

Big or small, all vendors need equitable access to government procurements. To increase participation by diverse businesses and communities, B.C. government buyers must:

- ▶ Collaborate across government to identify gaps and opportunities to increase participation by diverse vendors and communities in procurements.
- ▶ Use [BC Bid](#) to provide transparency in purchases.

Discovery Day Sessions

Discovery Day Sessions are an opportunity for interested vendors to meet with registered public-sector buyers who have posted RFIs. It's a chance to ask questions and get more information about the public-sector buyer's needs, requirements, and constraints.



How we're supporting these actions:

The Ministry of Citizens' Services will:

- ▶ Develop a framework to help buyers include measures for buying local in their purchasing criteria where suitable.
- ▶ Learn from B.C. small vendors what barriers they face in selling their goods and services to government and explore training and support tools to remove those barriers.
- ▶ Support Ministries in their use of RFIs and Discovery Day events to better connect with the marketplace and find solutions to government challenges.
- ▶ Lead a pilot project to make procurement and contract documents more accessible including the use of plain language.

Buying local vs trade agreements

All trade agreements the B.C. government is party to or subject to include language that does not allow us to express a preference for suppliers from B.C. if our procurements are over specified monetary values.

However, if a government procurement is below the monetary values set out in the trade agreements, then it may include a preference for a B.C. based supplier. This is especially the case if location can be a key criteria to the successful outcome to the procurement. To that end, the Ministry of Citizens' Services will be developing resources for buyers to include purchasing criteria to help them buy local.



Mission 3: Build capacity

Build greater capacity for procurement in the BC Public Service through enhanced career planning, training, and support.

To transform the way government purchases goods and services, the public sector needs procurement professionals who have up-to-date training, and have access to, and knowledge of, procurement tools, policies, and supports. More robust training resources and well-defined career pathways will set procurement professionals up for success and help to modernize public procurement in B.C.

By equipping the next generation of procurement professionals with the resources and supports they need, we can accelerate the transition to more impactful purchasing that supports government priorities.

Government calls to action



Build procurement knowledge.

When we share knowledge and wise practices, we open the door to collaboration and innovation that transforms how we purchase goods and services. In partnership with the BC Public Service Agency, B.C. government buyers must:

- ▶ Require all public servants involved in procurement and contract management to have baseline procurement and contract management knowledge through Procurement Foundations training.
- ▶ Support all government buyers in receiving up to date procurement and contract management skills training.
- ▶ Collaborate across government to identify gaps, opportunities, and share knowledge to build good procurement practice standards.



How we're supporting these actions:

The Ministry of Citizens' Services will:

- ▶ In partnership with the BC Public Service Agency, create and promote clear career pathways in procurement to recruit and retain procurement professionals within the BC Public Service.
- ▶ Update procurement training, support, and tools that will lead to improved and consistent business performance for all B.C. government procurement professionals.
- ▶ Develop operational policy, guidelines, and resources, and improve tools and templates to create consistency in the way procurement professionals purchase goods and services and make it easier do business with government.



Putting the plan into action

As we implement this revitalised vision for the future of procurement in B.C., we will continue to learn from the vendor community, explore future actions, and work across government to drive change. Procurement can and must be leveraged to help meet some of British Columbia's biggest priorities.

While progress has been made to modernize procurement processes, we have more work to do. The Deputy Ministers' Committee on Procurement and Strategic Contracts will champion the implementation of the three

missions in purchases across government. To help government deliver on this plan, the Ministry of Citizens' Services will develop tools, provide supports, and every two years will showcase progress from across government that demonstrates procurement as a strategic lever for change.

These missions and calls to action will help the government of B.C. build an economy that honours Indigenous rights, values, and interests, is sustainable and inclusive, and creates opportunities for everyone.



What to expect over the next 12 to 18 months

The Ministry of Citizens' Services is moving this plan into action. Over the next 12 to 18 months, we aim to show progress on the three missions by delivering the following actions.

Mission 1 – Leverage purchasing power

- ▶ Co-develop an action plan with the External Advisory Committee to increase Indigenous Peoples' participation in government procurements.
- ▶ Establish 2 to 3 new Indigenous-specific Corporate Supply Arrangements for Indigenous goods and services.
- ▶ Recommend social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic guidelines for purchases over \$75,000.

Mission 2 – Increase supplier access

- ▶ Build a proposal for establishing a vendor engagement and support program.
- ▶ Apply accessibility standards to all corporate solicitation templates.
- ▶ Roll out a pilot to test plain language procurement and contract wording.

Mission 3 – Build capacity

- ▶ Refresh the plan for corporate procurement learning.
- ▶ Develop a career path strategy for growing procurement talent within government.
- ▶ Complete the delivery of Procurement Foundations training for all public servants involved in procurement and contract management.

Social purchasing

◆ Last updated on February 13, 2024

Social impact procurement guidance for BC Procurement Resources

This web page contains guidance for Province of BC Ministry purchasers to follow if considering social impact in points-based solicitations services with a total value under \$75,000. Government purchasers may want to bookmark this page for ongoing reference as it is subject to change as policy continues to develop in this area.

Purchasers wishing to consider social impact in any purchase of services over \$75,000 should contact [Legal Services Branch](#) and [Procurement Services Branch](#) to obtain advice regarding incorporating social impact elements into the specific procurement.

The Ministry of Citizens' Services has developed the information on this webpage in association with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and the Ministry of Finance, Procurement Governance Office.

Social impact purchasing

Social impact purchasing can mean different things to different purchasers depending on whether the purchaser, like the Province, has certain trade and policy compliance obligations, or is a private sector purchaser that is not constrained in the same way. Likewise, it can mean different things to the vendor community. Some vendors expressly hold themselves out as social enterprises of various sorts while others may simply incorporate social impact measures into their operations without adopting a special designation or structure.

For the purposes of the Province, social impact purchasing, broadly described, is the use of purchasing power to create social value and support social policy objectives. For the guidance on this web page, social impact elements that may be considered, on a case-by-case basis, include:

case basis in a procurement and measured through a contract, include supplier diversity and workforce development:

- **Supplier diversity** means creating opportunities for diverse suppliers such as Indigenous peoples and employment equity seeking groups which could include people with disabilities and other traditionally underrepresented groups.
- **Workforce development** means offering apprenticeships, skills training and other developmental support to employees, contractors or volunteers, including diverse supplier groups.

It is intended that, where appropriate, use of social impact purchasing will both reward vendors for actions that add social value, and encourage vendors to look for new ways to increase their social value to improve their ability to compete for future procurement opportunities that may include social impact criteria.

The connection between purchasing and social policy objectives

The [BC Procurement Strategy](#) was launched in June 2018 and recognizes that government procurement in BC is based on principles that include value for money, transparency and accountability. The Strategy provides high-level direction from government on determining value for money:

Goal 1: To realize best value and increased benefit to British Columbians by using procurement strategically to improve social and environmental outcomes.

When including social impact criteria in an appropriate solicitation, in accordance with these guidelines, an assessment of value for money will include evaluating the vendor's willingness or ability to comply with the specific social impact elements that have been included in the procurement document and that become part of the resulting contract obligations.

All procurements, whether they include social impact criteria or not, must follow the Core Policy and Procedures Manual, including [Procurement Policy](#), which provides policy direction and reflects government's commitments to domestic and international Trade Agreements. Contact your [ministry procurement specialist](#) with questions.

When to use these guidelines

These pages provide guidance on incorporating social impact criteria into commonly used point-based solicitations for purchases under \$75,000. Point-based solicitations are typically used for procurement of services; points are awarded for value attributes: typically experience, price and approach, and may include, in accordance with these guidelines, social impact value attributes.

Purchasers wishing to consider social impact in any purchase of services over \$75,000 should contact [Legal Services Branch](#) and [Procurement Services Branch](#) to obtain advice regarding incorporating social impact elements into the specific procurement.

How to consider social impacts in procurement

The Province's standard government wide corporate solicitation templates that originate contracts include a section that allows for purchasers to describe the requirements and desirable attributes that points may be awarded for in the evaluation process. Please note that:

- Social impact criteria are properly applied as desirable, and not mandatory criteria.
- It is recommended that no more than 5% of the total points be awarded to social impact, to ensure that quality and price remain the most important criteria.

Some or all of the following criteria can be included in the appropriate section.

[Copy and paste the following example criteria into procurement document, as appropriate to the specifics of the procurement]

For the purposes of this procurement the following terminology applies:

- **Supplier diversity** means creating opportunities for diverse suppliers such as Indigenous peoples and employment equity seeking groups which could include people with disabilities and other traditionally underrepresented groups.
- **Workforce development** means offering apprenticeships, skills training and other developmental support to employees, contractors or volunteers, including diverse supplier groups.

To realize best value and increased benefits to British Columbians through this procurement, the Province will award points [*not to exceed 5 %*] to vendors that demonstrate that they have met or, if applicable, exceeded the social impact criteria to be

evaluated as set out in the specific procurement. This could include any or all, of the following:

- The vendor can demonstrate a commitment to supplier diversity and workforce development as described above (identify vendor practices and procedures that support this criteria); or
- The vendor offers job skills training or employment opportunities in support of supplier diversity (identify types of training and/or opportunities, groups represented, current and planned activities); or
- The vendor purchases goods or services (such as janitorial services, catering, office supplies, etc.) from vendors that support supplier diversity and workforce development (identify types of goods or services purchased, and how the vendor's supply chain supports supplier diversity and workforce development).

Instructions to Proponent/Respondent:

With respect to each of the bulleted points above, describe how the Proponent/Respondent meets or exceeds the criteria.

Monitor and measure

Evaluators should keep detailed records of all evaluation scoring, including social impact criteria, and be prepared to provide explanations for their rationale should they be required to conduct a debriefing. Records should be filed in the procurement file with all other documents.

Performance monitoring of all contracts is required by [Procurement Policy 52, 53 and 54 \(CPPM\)](#). Monitoring social impact purchasing obligations is important to ensure that in addition to the satisfaction of deliverables generally, the social impact deliverables are also being met. It is recommended that, in addition to information provided in proposals, contractors provide a final report listing specific social impacts realized through the term of the contract.

The information contained in these BC Procurement Resources is provided as general information related to the Province's procurement resources. This information is not

exhaustive and may become out of date. This information is not legal, policy, or business advice and users should make such further enquiries they deem necessary with their legal, policy, business or other advisors. The provisions of the [Procurement Policy](#) (CPPM) and the associated Practice Standard take precedence over any information contained in these resources that may be inconsistent.

Useful links

- [Solicitation processes and templates](#)
- [Procurement strategies and initiatives](#)
- [Procurement Policy \(CPPM\)](#)

Contacts

For questions about a specific opportunity, contact the individual listed in the solicitation documents

For general questions about government procurement: Email Procurement Services Branch at procurement@gov.bc.ca

Phone: [250-387-7300](tel:250-387-7300)

For questions about the procurement Strategy:

Email Procurement.Transformation@gov.bc.ca

Check the Legal Services Branch for information on [Client Service Coordinators](#)

Feedback and suggestions for the BC Procurement Resources website are welcome at Procurement.Resources@gov.bc.ca

[Procurement training and development](#) is available for ministry and broader public sector buyers

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Did you find what you were looking for?

Yes

No

The B.C. Public Service acknowledges the territories of First Nations around B.C. and is grateful to carry out our work on these lands. We acknowledge the rights, interests, priorities, and concerns of all Indigenous Peoples - First Nations, Métis, and Inuit - respecting and acknowledging their distinct cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments.



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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Impact Procurement

Revised: Date of last revision, January 15, 2024

Key Messages:

- We created Impact Procurement to include government's values of anti-racism, equity, climate accountability, and meaningful reconciliation into the ways government does business with vendors.
- All government purchases have the potential for social, Indigenous, environmental, or economic impact. Considering these impacts are important steps towards a more sustainable and inclusive economy that will help build resilience and foster innovation.
- The BC Impact Procurement project is a multi-year pilot project started in 2022 that will test a broadened scope of government's social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic impact purchasing guidelines.
- The pilot project is intended to help inform the policies, standards, and guidance necessary to use purchasing power to improve social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic outcomes for British Columbians.
- By leveraging procurement to realize the best value for taxpayers, we're working to support a resilient vendor marketplace in B.C. and increase business opportunities to

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

benefit individuals, families, and communities across the province.

Questions and Answers:

1) What is Impact Procurement?

- Impact Procurement, also called “social impact” procurement, refers to including social, Indigenous, environmental and economic values in purchasing activities.
- By adding specific criteria to purchasing activities we can work towards realizing best value and increasing benefit to British Columbians by using procurement strategically to improve social and environmental outcomes, and promote innovation.

2) How is Impact Procurement different from the social impact purchasing guidelines or the guidelines for environmentally responsible procurement?

- It is not different. This pilot project aims to broaden the scope of the current social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic impact purchasing guidelines to include purchases of all sizes and complexities to improve outcomes for British Columbians.
- For example, current guidelines provide advice for adding social impact in points-based solicitation services with a total value under \$75,000.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- The pilot provides support and advice to government buyers who want to incorporate impact criteria into their procurements of any value or level of complexity.

3) What progress have you made on Impact Procurement?

- My Ministry is working with teams across government to incorporate impact criteria into purchases of all kinds. They are helping buyers measure and score these criteria, so government can leverage procurement to create meaningful change for people and the planet.
- The data collected through this multi-year pilot program will contribute to the development of procurement tools, refinement of specific impact criteria, an improved understanding of the down-stream effects of impact procurements, and reporting.

4) Why are you doing this? Won't it impact government's ability to measure purchases based on price?

- Embedding government's values of anti-racism, equity, climate accountability, and meaningful reconciliation into the ways we do business is an important step toward a more sustainable and inclusive economy that will help build resilience and foster innovation.
- Impact Procurement is about additional value, not a replacement or diminishing of the measurements of quality and price.

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services

Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- When we spend strategically, government dollars can be leveraged to build a better British Columbia for everyone.

Contact:

Geoff Haines

Executive Director

Procurement and
Supply Division

250-507-8739

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Facts and Figures (Service British Columbia)

Revised: Date of last revision, January 16, 2024

All stats reflect January 1 - December 31, 2023

Service BC Centres

- 65 Service BC Centre locations throughout the province.
- Citizen Satisfaction Rate (2023 bi-annual survey results): 97%
- Provides 300 services related to a variety of programs on behalf of approximately 40 partner ministries and agencies.
- Average of two million transactions for 2023.
- In 2023, we introduced 6 new programs, each associated with various related services, to BC Service Centres:
 - Citizens' Services - BC Registries preferred service provider filing support
 - Citizens' Services - BC Demographic Survey support
 - Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship - Riparian Areas Protection Regulation authorization file review (Virtual Services)
 - Transportation and Infrastructure - Permitting applications (Virtual Services)
 - Environment & Climate Change Strategy - Land remediation and contamination applications (Virtual Services)
 - Emergency Management BC - Wildfire Resiliency Centre support & Emergency Support Services registration assistance

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

BC Services Card

- There are more than 5 million active physical cards in circulation, including 154,023 new cards in 2023.
- There are more than 1.8 million unique users actively engaged with the BC Services Card portal.
- In 2023, there were 783,132 new users of the BC Services card app showing an increased adoption of digital services facilitated by the BC Services Card.
- BC Services Card Apple App Store rating remains consistently high, maintaining a 4.5 year-over-year rating.
- In 2023, 12 new programs were added, bringing the total to 75.
- The BC Services Card is the one of the most trusted forms of digital identity in Canada, achieving level 3 assurance designation from the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada.

Contact Centre

- Inquiries answered by Provincial Contact Centre: more than 23 million
- Citizen Satisfaction Rate 2023: 85%+
- Translation services available in over 220 languages
- Service channel offerings: telephone, email, verify by video, webchat, and text channel services and online and website
- Calls Answered per month: 178,000
- Contact Centre programs added to date: 35

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

BC Registries

- Bi-Annual Business Satisfaction 2022-2023 rating: 75%
- Corporate Registry transactions processed for 2023: 790,616
- Calls answered in 2023: 103,809 total
 - Registries: 42,744
 - BC Online: 61,065
- Current number of active entities supported as of December 31, 2023:
 - Corporations: 617,039
 - Societies: 33,757
 - Cooperatives: 733
 - Sole Proprietorships: 756,913
 - General Partnerships: 142,248
 - Benefit Companies: 867
- In 2023, there were a total of 45,504 BC Online Accounts, which function like a bank account for accessing Provincial data systems and processing payments.
 - Total number of modernized Accounts (Basic and Premium): 52,634
- Personal Property Registry Transactions (including lien search) in 2023: 1,100,246
- Manufactured Home requests (including search requests) in 2023: 61,634
- Total name requests received for examination in 2023: 143,903
- Total name request transactions in 2023: 392,983

This material will be proactively released.

**2024/25 Estimates Note
Advice to the Minister**

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Contact:

Sheila Robinson	Assistant Deputy Minister	Service BC	604-908-1401
Geoffrey Wiggins	Executive Director	Service BC	250-588-3561

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Indigenous ID as a Secondary ID

Revised: Date of last revision, January 12, 2024

Key Messages:

- We're working to make sure every person has easy access to B.C. government services, both online and in-person.
- Currently First Nations people can use the Secure Certificate of Indian Status card issued by the federal government of Canada as primary ID and the Certificate of Indian Status issued by the federal government as secondary ID.
- The Ministry of Citizens' Services worked with its core partners in the Ministry of Health and ICBC to draft a framework to evaluate and approve identity documents for acceptance as Secondary ID.
- Ministry staff and Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) will engage First Nations, Modern Treaty Nations and organizations to better understand their methods of identity proofing and incorporate into the draft framework that has been established.
- In October 2023, two Indigenous Identity cards (Métis (MNBC) and the Tla'amin (sly-am-mon) Nation) were added to the Secondary ID list for both BC Services Card and BCeID.
- The inclusion of Indigenous citizenship cards for evaluation and approval as Secondary ID, in addition to the Indian

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Status cards already accepted, advances the work toward fulfilling our commitment to reconciliation under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

- **A longer-term outcome is to expand the framework to also include Primary ID.**
- **We are grateful to Indigenous Nations and organizations for working so closely with the province to make this important step possible.**

Questions and Answers:

1) What Indigenous identity cards are currently accepted as Secondary ID by the Province?

- Identity cards from the Métis (MNBC) and the Tla'amin (sly-am-mon) Nation are currently accepted as Secondary ID.
- The Province has also engaged with the Uchucklesaht (u-chuk-les-at) Tribe and the Huu-ay-aht (ho-ay-at) First Nation.
- In spring 2023, with support from the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR), the Province sent letters of introduction and invitation to all of the Modern Treaty Nations regarding the Indigenous secondary ID initiative.
- Longer term plans will include correspondence with all of B.C.'s Indigenous communities to inform and invite them to participate.

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

2) Will citizenship cards from all Indigenous peoples in B.C. be accepted as Secondary ID by the Province?

- Identity proofing requirements for the BC Services Card Program, are defined through CITZ Minister's Directions to the Provincial Identity Information Services Provider (PIISP), ICBC, and the Medical Services Commission (MSC).
- Recognizing the scope and volume of this work, an ID framework has been developed to assess the attributes and issuance process of each proposed additional secondary ID document.
- MNBC and the Tla'amin (sly-am-mon) Nation were added to the list of acceptable Secondary ID in October 2023.

3) What if a community is not accepted as secondary ID? Is there an appeal process?

- In some cases, recommendations could be made for adjustments to the issuance processes or card security feature enhancement to align with privacy and security practices.

4) How long does it take from start to finish to be assessed for use of Secondary ID?

- Due to the varying ways that identity cards are issued and the nuance of each practice of identity proofing and card production, some may take longer than others.
- Generally, the practice of identity proofing and card production, would take a couple of weeks.

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

5) Will Indigenous identity cards be accepted as Primary ID by the Province?

- We're reviewing identity cards as acceptable Secondary ID, as a first step in formalizing this review process.
- Primary ID involves adoption of Pan Canadian identity standards and is a more complex process given national and international standards for issuing Primary ID that B.C. must comply with however, we remain committed to continuing to work with other jurisdictions on this issue.

Contact: ED

Dipak Agarwal A/Executive Director Service BC (IDIM)

Government Financial
Information

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Service BC Supporting Equity of Access

Revised: Date of last revision, January 18, 2024

Key Messages:

- Service BC is committed to ensuring government services remain accessible to all people in British Columbia.
- Our focus is on delivering excellent service, offering people choice and convenience, and making it easier to access government services while keeping personal information protected.
- Service BC employees receive diversity and inclusion training to provide better services for all people.
- All Service BC Centres are equipped with hearing loop technology to serve the hard of hearing and hearing impaired.
- Additionally, the Service BC Provincial Contact Centre uses a relay service for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have trouble with speech, Telephone Device for the Deaf.
- Service BC offers translation services in over 220 languages to better respond to the diverse communities we serve.

People in remote communities

- The Service BC Mobile Service Centre is designed to improve access for people living in remote and underserved

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

communities by bringing services directly to people. The Mobile Service Centre van is designed to be welcoming, inclusive and accessible to everyone.

- The Mobile Service Centre is equipped with hearing loops for those who are hard of hearing and translation services for people that require services in their language.**
- To support people entering the van, there is an additional exterior step and two wall grab bars.**
- For those who are unable to step into the van, the Mobile Service Centre has an attached, heated tent to ensure everyone can obtain access to government services.**
- In communities where there is no connectivity, the Mobile Service Centre is equipped with satellite connectivity to ensure services can be provided in those communities.**
- Service BC is supporting people in British Columbia to access digital government services through online channels such as verifying people's identity via video through the BC Services Card app, eliminating the need for an in-person visit.**
- These modern service channels enable Service BC to promote and inform the adoption of digital programs by serving people through the channel they choose or need.**
- In circumstances where individuals do not have access to a smartphone or tablet to use the BC Services Card app to access online services, they can now use the BC Token.**

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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- **The BC Token is for people who do not have a smartphone or tablet but want to access government services online with a personal computer. This small device enables secure access online along with a username and password.**
- **Service BC's webpage is now available in four more languages (French, Punjabi, Traditional and Simplified Chinese).**

Questions and Answers:

1) What is Service BC doing to ensure all people living in B.C. can access services?

- Service BC offers access to government services through multiple channels. Our primary channel is in-person, through our 65 Service BC Centres located in rural and urban communities across our province. We also provide telephone, email, and text channel services through our Service BC Provincial Contact Centre, online and website channels, and through our Mobile Service Centre.
- Over 300 government services can be accessed in-person at our Service BC Centres and the majority can also be offered through the Mobile Service Centre.
- The Service BC Provincial Contact Centre handled more than 2.3 million enquiries over the last year, providing information and navigation support for more than 300 government services.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services

Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- People can use the BC Services Card App to access a variety of online government services, including health records (lab results, medication, and immunization records), Student Financial Aid, ICBC for online auto insurance renewals and claims, and federal services such as the Canada Revenue Agency's My Account portal.
- An important part of improving access is removing barriers and addressing challenges to accessing services. For example, Service BC is making it possible for people to get what they need without visiting a government office in-person by supporting access to digital services with the BC Services Card app.
- Understanding the diverse and changing needs of the people who look to us for assistance is key to Service BC's commitment to providing service excellence.
- Our newest service channel, the Service BC Mobile Service Centre is a pilot project designed to deliver services directly to people in communities facing barriers to service throughout British Columbia.
- The services offered through the pilot are comparable to what you find in any other Service BC centre including Driver Licensing Services, Photo BC Services Cards and BCID Photo cards.

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

2) With the increased drive to online services, if residents don't have Internet, how do they access Service BC?

- People who cannot access services online, can visit one of our 65 Service BC Centres located in communities around our province or call the Service BC Provincial Contact Centre for assistance.
- The Service BC Mobile Service Centre pilot is a new service channel that brings services to communities facing barriers (i.e., geographical, wildfires, floods, connectivity).

3) How can people who don't have a smart phone or tablet set up their BC Services Card app?

- Individuals who do not have access to a smartphone or tablet can now use the BC Token.
- In late 2022, the BC Token was launched for individuals that do not have a smartphone or tablet but still wish to access government services online with a personal computer. This small device, available to obtain by visiting a Service BC centre, enables secure access online along with a username and password.

4) How can people that are not eligible for a BC Services Card, access services online?

- People who are not eligible for a BC Services Card can now use the app to access online services.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- B.C. students who are studying in other provinces or countries, military members, and some federal employees, can make use of this feature.

5) How does Service BC support people who are deaf or hard of hearing to access government services?

- All 65 Service BC Centres, and the Mobile Service Centre are equipped with hearing loop technology to serve people who are hard of hearing or hearing impaired.
- The Service BC Provincial Contact Centre offers both Telephone Device for the Deaf and Video Relay Service for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have difficulties with speech.
- The BC Services Card identity verification process has improved accessibility by accommodating the use of an individual's handwritten communication, American Sign Language, and the use of communication tools such as text to voice devices and supports minimal third party (advocate) assistance.

6) How does Service BC support people who do not speak English who are trying to access government services?

- The Service BC Provincial Contact Centre offers translation services in over 220 different languages.
- Service BC also makes every effort possible to assist British Columbians who need a translator to help them during an in-person visit to a Service Centre.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

7) How is Service BC responding to the new *Accessible BC Act* passed in June 2021?

- Service BC is committed to identifying barriers to service and addressing them through continuous improvement.
- We undertake regular surveys to understand the overall satisfaction with our services and key drivers for improvement (i.e., issue resolution, going the extra mile, timely help, and ease of access).

Contact:

Adriana Poveda

Executive Director,
Service Delivery

Service BC

Government Financial
Information

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Mobile Outreach

Revised: Date of last revision, January 16, 2024

Key Messages:

- The Province is committed to providing people in B.C. with improved access to the supports and services they count on.
- This includes looking at the many ways people interact with us – by telephone, online and in-person – and seeing where we can improve the way we connect with the communities we serve.
- Service BC's Mobile Outreach pilot program is designed to reach communities facing barriers or that require a different, scalable, and flexible engagement model to access government services.
- Service BC's goal is to provide services to those that are underserved or facing barriers to service such as geography, language and cultural, informational, technological, and barriers created by natural disasters.
- Service BC works with other service partners and community organizations such as Service Canada, Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), and the United Way to provide comprehensive service delivery.

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- **There are two types of Mobile Outreach that Service BC offers:**
 - **Community Outreach which provides non-photo ID services and informational services to communities.**
 - **Mobile Service Centre van which mirrors most services of an in-person Service BC Centre including photo ID, and Income Assistance services.**

Questions and Answers:

1) How many Mobile Outreach events have been held as of December 31, 2023?

- Answer: 68 events

2) Where have these events taken place?

- Events have been held in Anacora, Ahousaht, Bella Coola, Chetwynd, Courtenay, Cowichan, Canal Flats, Cache Creek, Cayoose Creek, Campbell River, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Fraser Lake, Gitanmaax, Hazelton, Hagwilgit, Kamloops, Kispiox, Lillooet, Nanaimo, New Westminster, McBride, Macleod Lake, Penticton, Penelakut, Prince George, Riindel, Richmond, Sik-e-dakh, Squamish, Tofino, Tumbler Ridge, Ucluelet, Vernon, Victoria

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3) Which Indigenous Communities have received Mobile Outreach?

- Anacla, McLeod Lake, Penelakut (pen-el-a-cut), Ahousaht (a-howz-at), Sik-e-dakh (sik-e-dakh), Hagwilgit (hag-wil-git), Cayoose (kai-yuse creek) Creek, Kispiox (kiss-pea-ox), Gitanmaax (git-n-max), Sumas (sue-mas) First Nation

4) How are locations and dates for Mobile Outreach services determined?

- Service BC is developing a strategy on how to determine the community, the frequency of the outreach, and the operational requirements for future Mobile Outreach events.
- We have criteria in development that we plan to use to determine communities for outreach, including remoteness amongst other barriers.

5) What services are delivered at Mobile Outreach events?

- Mobile Outreach aims to mirror services available at a Service BC centre. The community needs, demand and travel requirements will determine the services provided at the event.
- Service BC is always equipped to provide birth certificates and other non-photo ID services, information, address changes, and take payments at all outreach events. If the Mobile Service Centre van attends the event, photo ID and income assistance services will additionally be available.

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- Service BC often works with community organizations and government agencies to better address what services may be required in a community, examples of this are Service Canada, and the CRA.

6) Can Mobile Outreach support disaster response?

- Yes. In situations where people cannot access a Service BC centre due to a natural disaster or extreme weather event, Mobile Outreach can be set up to support people by providing access to government services by working collaboratively with Emergency Management and Climate Readiness.
- As of December 31, 2023, Mobile Outreach has supported ten communities experiencing natural disasters. These communities are Cache Creek, Salmon Arm, Scotch Creek, Revelstoke, Kamloops, Hope, Vernon, West Kelowna, Kelowna, and Penticton, and evacuee registration with Emergency Management BC at Sumas (sue-mas) First Nation.

Contact:

Adriana Poveda	Executive Director, Service Delivery Development and Innovation	Service BC	778-698-2090
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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: BC Registries Modernization

Revised: Date of last revision, January 17, 2024

Key Messages:

- We are improving our business registry services in a multi-year project to keep pace with technology and an increasing demand for online programs and services.
- Moving more government services online safely and securely provides people with improved response times, more service selection and greater, more convenient access when needed.

Digital verification

- People can use BC Services Mobile App – one of the most trusted forms of online identification. Users can also provide a notarized affidavit with a BCeID login and a one-time passcode.
- Users who have a BC Services Card and don't have a mobile device can set up a username and password with a BC token, obtained free of charge at a Service BC Office.
- We have expanded the ability for verified Sole Proprietors to use a Digital Business Card to facilitate verifiable digital access for the business owner acquiring business services from a 3rd party.
- Our identification requirements help other businesses and agencies, such as banks and other government programs,

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

trust the BC Registry's information and the identities of those representing a business.

Questions and Answers:

1) What work has BC Registries completed to date in their modernization journey?

- BC Registries has completed the following:
 - In February 2023, a search capability for the Manufactured Home Registry was released to all Service BC Offices, to better assist people of B.C.
 - In March 2023, public users of the Manufactured Homes Registry and Personal Property Registry can now search by owner name, organization, registration, or serial number and download reports.
 - In May 2023, the Societies Amendment Act came into force with new policies and enhancements to the Societies Online application, including new forms, a new record keeper, and additional compliance requirements for BC Societies.
 - In September 2023, a new "Business and Director Search" was launched to provide enhanced investigation tools for enforcement agencies, supporting anti-money laundering and tax fraud efforts.
 - In September 2023, BC Registries and Vital Statistics released the new modernized eWills application.

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- In October 2023, enhancements were made to the BC Registry application, taking user feedback and creating a more user-friendly experience for Name Requests and business registration.
- In November 2023, BC Registries released a new cooperative association special resolution self-service filing.
- In November 2023, BC Registries implemented in the Manufactured Homes Registry, the ability for registries staff to process transfers of manufactured home ownership in cases of death, allowing the transfer to surviving joint tenant(s), as well as facilitating the transfer to a new owner due to sale or gift.

2) Why is verifying identity necessary?

- Online transactions can be used to fraudulently undermine a person's identity.
- Our government is committed to ensuring the integrity of online filings.
- For the corporate registry, verifying the identity of the person improves corporate transparency and provides greater assurances to the business community as to who the directors of an organization are.
- The people of this province have a right to know who owns a business operating in this province.

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- That's why many businesses are required annually to file any changes to the directors who have a controlling interest in a company.

3) How can people who are not eligible for a BC Services Card get access to BC Registries online services?

- The Province's Identity Information Management program is responsible for providing identity and authentication services to support British Columbia residents' transactions with government services.
- BC Registries, in collaboration with the Identity Information Management program, has developed a solution for non-BC residents.
- This solution includes having a notary provide a notarized affidavit of the person. This solution continues to build and support identity verification while meeting privacy and security requirements.
- Users can also use the BC Services Card mobile app by providing 2 pieces of appropriate government-issued ID.

Contact:

Kaine Sparks

Executive Director,
BC Registries

Service BC

Government Financial
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This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Beneficial Ownership Registry

Revised: Date of last revision, January 17, 2024

Key Messages:

- The requirements for private companies to hold, in their records office, a list of beneficial owners came into force October 1, 2020.
- As recommended by the Cullen Commission, BC Registries will establish a Beneficial Ownership Registry for private incorporated companies to mitigate the risk of money laundering, tax evasion, and other illegitimate activity - ultimately protecting the integrity of Canada's financial system.
- Amending legislation was introduced and passed in April 2023 to support the implementation and operation of the "Registrar's Transparency Register".
- Leveraging existing investments, this will be a new registry and expand capabilities to include regulatory oversight, enforcement and multi-jurisdictional collaboration.
- As a strong advocate in addressing anti-money laundering initiatives, BC would be a Canadian leader in the development and implementation of a registry that could be internationally recognized as a "best practices" beneficial ownership registry.

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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Questions and Answers:

1) Why is this a priority?

- More than 200 jurisdictions have signed up to implement the 40 recommendations on anti-money laundering and protection against terrorist financing.
- This system meets the recommendation of the Cullen Commission to address the risk of money laundering and terrorist activity financing in British Columbia.

2) How many businesses will be impacted?

- It is estimated that 1 million incorporated B.C. companies (excluding sole proprietorships) will require registration via the Registrar's Transparency Register.

3) How much will it cost?

- Registries has secured \$8 million in capital funding from the Digital Investment Office over 36 months starting in 2022/23 to build a Beneficial Ownership Registry, and meet the recommendations laid out in the Cullen Commission to combat money laundering, tax evasion, and other illegitimate activities.
- Costs will be minimized by building the digital service, using BC Registries' common components in the recently modernized registry platform.
- Operating costs can be offset by BC Registries' operating revenues with no impact to government's fiscal plan.

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4) How much work has been done?

- BC Registries started service design on the registry in fall 2022 and has sourced a complete agile development team.
- The Ministry of Finance led the amending legislation that supports a "Registrar's Transparency Register" which was passed in April 2023.
- In September 2023, BC Registries developed and released a new "Business and Director Search" capability for enforcement agencies, with features that will be used for the Transparency Register.

5) Will it be integrated with the federal registry or other jurisdictions?

- B.C. continues to work with the several Canadian jurisdictions and federal government bodies to ensure project alignment and future data sharing possibilities.
- BC's Beneficial Ownership Registry will include requirements to allow for multi-jurisdictional data sharing, including Land Title and Survey Authority and Ministry of Finance.

Contact:

Kaine Sparks

Executive Director,
BC Registries

Service BC

Government Financial
Information

This material will be proactively released.

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Facts and Figures (Real Property Division)

Revised: Date of last revision, January 22, 2024

Real Property Division Portfolio

- Real Property Division (RPD) provides everything needed to design, set up, and manage a government workplace.
- RPD's client base, as defined under the *Public Agency Accommodations Act*, includes the ministries (mandated) as well as the broader public sector (voluntary customers).
- RPD's portfolio of facilities includes government occupied office space, Service BC front counters, and special purpose buildings such as courthouses, laboratories, and correctional centres.
- Schools, post-secondary, municipal, and hospital facilities are not included within the RPD portfolio.
- As of January 22, 2024, RPD's real estate portfolio was comprised of:

	Buildings (#)	Area (m²)	Proportion of Space (%)
Owned	445	733,152	47.9
Leased	524	560,921	36.6
Maintained	508	237,147	15.5
Total	1,477	1,531,220	100.0

- Additionally, RPD manages 257 land parcels, totaling 570.6 hectares.
- 95 per cent of the total space with RPD's real estate portfolio is serviced by CBRE Ltd.

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Budget Summary

- RPD's capital plan directly supports government's Budget 2024 priorities, as follows:
 - Capital investments that support the province's priority commitments, such as CleanBC, ministry client programming requirements (e.g. Public Safety and Solicitor General, Ministry of Attorney General), and Hybrid Work Strategy initiatives.
 - Maintaining infrastructure that supports the delivery of critical government services.
 - Investments that provide a foundation for the economy, jobs, and communities.
- Total capital budget changes are outlined in the table on the next page.

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Real Property

(\$ millions)	23/24 Budget	24/25 Budget	Change
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Nanaimo Correctional Centre	\$60.94	\$7.96	(\$52.98)
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Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information

Strategic Acquisitions of Buildings	\$8.01	\$8.01	-
TI's for Buildings acquired under Strategic Acquisitions	\$7.92	\$16.20	\$8.28
Energy Smart Program (CleanBC)	\$15.53	\$7.32	(\$8.22)
Electric Vehicle (ZEV) Charging Stations	\$0.48	-	(\$0.48)
Courthouse Improvements	\$13.86	\$11.98	(\$1.88)
Vancouver Law Courts Renovation	\$12.56	\$11.34	(\$1.22)
Port Coquitlam Law Courts Renovation	\$19.53	\$21.92	\$2.39

Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information

MCFD MYAP - Duncan	\$0.46	-	(\$0.46)
SDPR Risk Review Related TI's	\$5.59	\$5.26	(\$0.33)
PSSG Land Acquisitions	\$0.68	\$0.68	-
Kamloops Option to Purchase	\$1.55	-	(\$1.55)

Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information

Office Furniture	\$1.50	\$0.58	(\$0.92)
Routine Capital	\$80.35	\$66.71	(\$13.65)
	\$259.61	\$233.57	(\$26.03)

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Priority Capital Projects

- Three significant priority capital projects are under construction or will begin construction in 2024/25:
 - *Under construction: Nanaimo Correctional Centre (\$180.6 million)*
 - A design-build model is being used to leverage design innovation with cost and construction delivery effectiveness.
 - Once complete, the new facility will provide enhanced safety and security services to accommodate remanded individuals from central and northern Vancouver Island.
 - Set in a campus-style environment, the replacement facility will support a more therapeutic and normalized living environment within a culturally responsive design.
 - Expected to reach completion in 2024/25.

○ Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information

○ Cabinet Confidences

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Strategic Acquisitions

Properties acquired in the last five years are outlined in the table below:

2019/2020	Accepted Offer (\$M's)	Transaction Closing Date
Surrey - 13545 64th Ave	4.33	February 3, 2020
Vancouver - 2810 Grandview Hwy	10.03	February 18, 2020
Prince George - 490 Brunswick St	1.50	March 5, 2020
2020/2021		
Kelowna	2.00	November 30, 2020
West Kelowna	1.40	March 15, 2021
2021/2022		
None		
2022/2023		
Kamloops - 447 Columbia St	9.95	April 18, 2022
Nanaimo - 3960 Biggs Rd	0.76	December 20, 2022
2023/24		
Kamloops - 441 Columbia St	17.00	September 28, 2023

*Funded by MIRR (including property transfer tax and conveyance fees/expenses).

Enabling Public Service Renewal - Workplaces

- Consolidation of spaces which are under-utilized due to the increase in remote work into strategic owned and leased assets Government Financial Information
- The primary goals of consolidation are to:

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- Reduce the size and increase the value of the real estate portfolio, leading to:
 - Government Financial Information
 - Lower utility costs.
 - Investment in strategic, high-quality properties.
- Provide modern, technology-supported, inclusive, and fully accessible work settings.
- Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Increase high-quality staff attraction and retention, making the BC Public Service (BCPS) a leading employer of choice.
- Consolidations will take the form of three types of projects: full tenant improvements (TI's), minimal TI's, and furniture solutions. For example:
 - A consolidation initiative is underway in Victoria, where CITZ is integrating several existing locations into a central hub, optimizing existing Leading Workplace tenant improvements, and introducing targeted enhancements. This will result in the vacating of multiple spaces, including a more efficient allocation of over 1,500 employees to a building that previously supported 1,000 employees.
 - The Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS) in Victoria is consolidating staff into a hybrid workplace at St. Ann's Academy, achieving a 40 per cent reduction in space.
 - Ministries such as the BC Public Service Agency (BCPSA) is relocating to owned underutilized space in 2025.

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- For each 1 per cent reduction in office space (7,000 m²), greenhouse gas emissions are reduced by 119 metric tons of CO² per year, equivalent to taking 36 cars off the road.

Facilities Management Services

- In 2019, the province entered into a five-year agreement with CBRE Ltd.
- Service commenced under the CBRE agreement in April 2020.
- The CBRE agreement is valued at \$1.069 billion over five years, including management and technician fees, project fees and costs, operations and maintenance costs, and utilities costs.

Stewarding Government Building Assets (including Accessibility)

- A Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) is used to gauge the integrity of the government real estate portfolio.
- Investments are made after considering a number of criteria such as condition of the building, seismic conditions, functionality, condition of building mechanical and electrical systems, feedback from clients, deferred maintenance/repairs required, current and future utilization, etc.
- In 2023, the aggregate FCI for the building portfolio was 0.56, a slight increase from 0.55 in 2021.
- Accessibility is an integral consideration in investment planning and scoping of routine capital projects. Over the past fiscal year and including this upcoming fiscal year, approximately \$8 million has been planned for accessibility improvements (\$4.6 million in FY 2023/24 and \$3.4 million in FY 2024/25).
- Climate action investments under the CleanBC Government Buildings Program in FY 2023/24 amounted to \$8.5 million (based on forecast

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information). FY2023/24 was the last year of the CleanBC Government Buildings Program funding.

- The accelerated implementation of an Electric Vehicle Charging Station network at government facilities is underway with a target of over 600 stations installed across the province by the end of 2024/25.

Property Dispositions

- Real estate that is surplus to government needs is sold at best value to generate revenue for the Province.
- Gains from the previous years include:

Year	Gains
2023/24	\$32.2 million
2022/23	\$27.4 million
2021/22	\$46.7 million

Contact:

Sunny Dhaliwal Assistant Deputy Real Property Division 250 380-8311
Minister

2023/24 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Rationalization of Office Spaces

Revised: Date of last revision, January 23, 2024

Key Messages:

- Prior to the pandemic, most public service employees worked from permanent office locations. Since March 2020, Ministry of Citizens' Services has been instrumental in supporting the BC Public Service (BCPS) to work and deliver services remotely.
- Today's workforce is increasingly mobile, supported by new technological tools in flexible and/or remote workspaces, resulting in engaged and productive workers.
- Ministry of Citizens' Services created the Future Workplace Strategy to consolidate government's office space portfolio with goals to:
 - Reduce the size and increase the value of the real estate portfolio, leading to:
 - Government Financial Information
 - Lower utility costs,
 - Investing in strategic, high-quality properties.
 - Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
 - Increase high-quality staff attraction and

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2023/24 Estimates Note

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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retention, making the BC Public Service a leading employer of choice.

Questions and Answers:

1) What is the point of the Hybrid Work Strategy?

- My ministry is currently working on a comprehensive implementation plan for rollout of the Hybrid Work Strategy that will over time rationalize the office space portfolio by undertaking consolidation projects across the province.
- Employees working in under-utilized spaces due to the increase in remote work will be consolidated into strategic owned and leased assets,^{Government Financial Information}
Government Financial Information

2) Why are you not actively reducing your lease portfolio?

- Government Financial Information
- We are working with ministries to re-evaluate workspace requirements under a new hybrid model and identify additional opportunities across the province to modernize, consolidate and update the real estate portfolio.

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3) Will there be savings to government with this change?

- While there will be savings to the government from a reduced portfolio, it's too soon to provide an estimate.

Government Financial Information

-

4) How is your ministry facilitating remote work with supportive technologies?

- With widespread adoption of mobile devices and technology, we have demonstrated government's ability to adapt to remote work with minimal impact. With these tools and secure Virtual Private Network (VPN) connections ministry staff can access government's network and conduct their business.
- With the successful adoption of MS Teams to keep government connected, further IT tools will need to be developed or procured to support future work methods including additional collaborative tools that support teams with a distributed model.
- As part of the Future Workplace Strategy, we will use several new workspace management technologies across the BCPS that will help facilitate higher utilization of our spaces and a better user experience for staff when working at the office. These include items such as a corporate workspace booking, and centralized access controls.

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5) What other factors led to the decision to move forward with the Future Work Model now?

- This is a question better referred to the Minister of Finance who is also responsible for the Public Service Agency (PSA).

6) What are you doing with vacant space?

- We're working to modernize and consolidate our office portfolio.
- Our aim is to maximize space utilization and also provide flexible work options for our employees.

Government Financial Information



7) What other policy considerations and social impacts does the rationalization of office space affect?

- Rationalization of office spaces aligns with GBA+ principles, promoting diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and equity in workplace location, configurations, and technology.
- Rationalization of office spaces supports the BCPS in being a modern, competitive employer committed to employee well-being and work-life balance.
- Rationalization of office spaces aligns with the "triple bottom line" objectives, providing financial benefits, improving social aspects like collaboration, and contributing to environmental sustainability.

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8) What other forms will consolidation take?

- Consolidations will take the form of three types of projects, full tenant improvements, minimal tenant improvements, and furniture solutions. For example:
 - A consolidation initiative is underway in Victoria, where CITZ is integrating several existing locations into a central hub. This will result in the vacating of multiple spaces, including a more efficient allocation of over 1,500 employees to a building that previously supported 1,000 employees.
 - The Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS) in Victoria is consolidating staff into a hybrid workplace at St. Ann's Academy, achieving a remarkable 40 per cent reduction in space.
 - Agencies like the BC Public Service Agency (BCPSA) are consolidating to vacate and optimize space

Government Financial Information

Government Financial Information

Government Financial Information

Contact:

Sunny Dhaliwal Assistant Deputy Real Property Division 250-380-8311
Minister

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2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: CleanBC Government Buildings Program

Revised: Date of last revision, January 23, 2024

Key Messages:

- The Province is working hard to build a low-carbon economy by changing how we live, work and commute, via the CleanBC Plan.
- To support this important work, my ministry launched the CleanBC Government Buildings Program in 2019.
- Under the program, we're working to make government buildings more energy efficient, and we're reducing greenhouse gas emissions through retrofits, innovative building design, and by switching to clean energy sources.
- The CleanBC Government Buildings program has been a catalyst for energy and greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction projects across the ministry's building portfolio.
- Under the guidance of this program, we have achieved a 43 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, as compared to 2010 standards and we are on track to achieve the 2030 reduction targets.
- Some of our work to date includes:
 - Completing the first Canadian Green Building Council Zero Carbon certified building of the government

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portfolio in Williams Lake – an office space for the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

- **Installing 226 electric vehicle charging stations at government buildings throughout the province, with many more planned for coming years.**
- **Implementing energy upgrades at more than 70 government buildings throughout the province, including lighting, improved heating systems, and better insulation. Examples include:**

Building	City	Building Type	Energy Project
800 Smithe St.	Vancouver	Courthouse	Low carbon heating system
9000 17th St.	Dawson Creek	Office	High efficiency heating system
2000 Ospika Blvd.	Prince George	Office	High efficiency heating system
4780 Roger St.	Port Alberni	Health Centre	Lighting upgrade
3793 Alfred Ave	Smithers	Courthouse	Improved insulation

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- **Modernizing the building controls in more than 80 buildings, which allows for optimal energy consumption and reduced energy waste. Examples include:**

Building	City	Type of Building
205 Industrial Rd.	Cranbrook	Office
640 Borland St.	Williams Lake	Office
1229 Oceanview Dr.	Queen Charlotte	Office
851 16 th St NE	Salmon Arm	Health Unit
583 Fairview Rd	Oliver	Office
2455 Mansfield Dr.	Courtney	Office

- **Completing climate risk assessments at various buildings throughout the province, which will be used to inform future investments.**
- **Implementing a three-year Climate Risk Management and Adaptation Program to advance climate adaptation initiatives by building capacity within the ministry, adapting existing business processes to improve climate resilience of the government building portfolio, and planning how to prepare government buildings for climate-change impacts.**

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Questions and Answers:

1) Is Citizens' Services on track to achieve the legislated greenhouse gas emissions targets?

- Yes, we are on track to achieve the legislated greenhouse gas emissions targets.
- The CleanBC Government Buildings Program is driven by the *Climate Change Accountability Act (CCAA)*.
- CCAA legislates provincial targets of 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2007 levels by 2030, a 60 per cent reduction from 2007 levels by 2040, and an 80 per cent reduction in emissions by 2050.
- The Provincial CleanBC plan requires that public-sector buildings achieve a 50 per cent greenhouse gas emissions reduction relative to 2010 by 2030.
- Through the work done under the direction of this program, government buildings managed by my ministry have achieved a 43 per cent reduction in GHG emissions for the 2022 reporting year, as compared to 2010 emissions, and are on track to meet the 2030 targets.
- The CleanBC Government Buildings Program uses six pathways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption in government buildings.
- For the 2023 reporting year, emissions are expected to be measured, reported, and published in June 2024 as per the

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Climate Change Accountability Act and the Carbon Neutral Government Regulation.

2) What is the budget associated with the program?

- My ministry was provided funding over five years (2019/20 to 2023/24) for the CleanBC Government Buildings Program, which formally launched in June 2019.
- For fiscal year 2024/25 my ministry will be spending the final allocation of funding totaling just over \$7 million.
- Investments are made from a triple bottom line lens to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions while also encouraging a lifecycle return on investment and increased occupant comfort.
- The type of projects includes lighting upgrades, Heating Ventilation and Cooling upgrades, building automation system upgrades, and building envelope upgrades, among others.

3) How does your ministry plan and prioritize projects for the CleanBC Government Buildings program?

- My ministry conducts several energy and greenhouse gas emissions reduction studies every year to assess opportunities across the provincial portfolio to implement energy projects.
- Opportunities are further assessed and prioritized using a triple bottom line perspective.

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- Pilot and demonstration projects are also included in the plan to build capacity and knowledge, such as the Zero Carbon retrofit project in Williams Lake.
- We also work with our client ministries to determine the requirement of investments, such as those required for electrical vehicle charging stations.

4) Is renewable energy, such as solar energy, being considered for Government Buildings?

- Reducing energy and GHG emissions at government buildings is a priority for the BC Government. Under the CleanBC Government Buildings Program, we have achieved a 43 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2010.
- Annually, several energy and greenhouse gas emissions reduction studies are conducted to assess opportunities and prioritize the implementation of energy projects. Through that process, different technologies are evaluated, including renewable energy and the best solution for the asset is selected based on a triple bottom line approach.
- For example, through this process solar opportunities are identified. Recently completed solar installations at government buildings include projects in Victoria and Williams Lake. Two more solar energy projects are under construction in Kamloops and Nelson.

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5) How many electric vehicle charging stations has CITZ installed?

- Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS) are identified as one of the six pathways of the CleanBC Government Buildings Program.
- My ministry is continuing to install charging stations for both government fleet use, as well as for employees and public that visit government buildings.
- Installation of EVCS at ministry managed buildings began in 2018. Since then, approximately 226 charging stations have been installed at 86 sites. 122 spaces have been designated for employee and visitor use and 104 spaces for fleet vehicles.
- These charging stations are deployed portfolio wide including government offices (59), correctional centres (8), health units (4) and courthouses (15).

6) How many EVCS does CITZ plan to install in the future?

- Currently, there are 9 employee and visitor stations, as well as an additional 124 fleet charging stations under construction.
- Demand for charging stations on CITZ managed properties is mainly driven by partner ministry fleet procurement decisions.
- We install an average of 6 or more chargers per site in anticipation of future requirements and to greatly reduce the implementation cost per charging station. The intention is to have charging infrastructure in place so that fleet vehicles can be readily supported as they are procured.

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- In response to the ministry's plans to purchase electric vehicles, CITZ is planning an additional 300 fleet charging stations across 58 sites and 11 employee and visitor charging stations across 3 sites during fiscal 2024/25.

EVCS Projects	Employee/Visitor	Fleet	Total*
Installed To Date	122	104	226
Projects Underway	9	124	133
Projects Planned for FY24/25	11	300	311
Total			670

*Numbers last updated on Jan 23, 2024

- Also, CITZ has secured a new end to end EV charging program with its existing facilities management service providers, to support the annual deployment of hundreds of charging stations in coming years to support government's fleet greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

7) Does CITZ charge EVCS users for utilizing the stations?

- Currently, there is no additional fee to use the charging stations. Users are only charged regular parking rates (if applicable).

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8) What is the budget for the Electric Vehicle Charging Stations program?

- For 2024/25 my ministry does not have a dedicated budget for EV charging stations. However, we will be leveraging the final year of Clean BC funding accordingly.
- Since the launch of the CleanBC Government Buildings program, CITZ is on track to spend \$5.5 million cumulatively by end of fiscal 2023/24 on Electric Vehicle Charging Station projects, including assessments, procurement, and installations; on average, the cost is approximately \$15,500 per charging station.

9) What is CITZ doing to make government buildings more resilient to climate change?

- Climate change has major implications for Provincial buildings; advancing the resiliency of government buildings will help protect both people and critical public infrastructure during extreme weather events.
- In 2022 we launched a three-year Climate Risk Management and Adaptation Program to advance climate adaptation initiatives by building capacity within the ministry, adapting existing business processes to improve climate resilience of the government building portfolio, and planning how to prepare government buildings for climate-change impacts.
- We have developed a custom Geographic Information System (GIS) based hazard screening tool to evaluate climate hazards across the portfolio to better understand what communities,

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buildings, and programs are more at risk to specific climate hazards than others.

- For critical facilities about to have major investments, we are completing climate risk assessments to understand the most significant climate risks facing that facility, and to identify areas that will need adaptation to become more resilient to climate change.
- Though our annual capital investment process we are making our facilities more resilient to climate hazards such as extreme heat, floods, and air quality issues due to wildfires by adding or upgrading cooling systems, improving insulation, drainage and air filtration systems.
- In partnership with the B.C. Climate Action Secretariat, we developed minimum climate resilience standards, including requirements for new and existing buildings to be applied when systems are being renewed, repaired, or replaced.
- We are also building internal capacity by developing climate adaptation training modules specific to our staff needs.

Contact:

Sunny Dhaliwal Assistant Deputy Real Property Division 250-380-8311
Minister

2024/25 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Title: Accessibility

Revised: Date of last revision, February 14, 2024

Key Messages:

- My ministry is committed to providing universal access, diversity, equity, and inclusiveness in B.C. government buildings.
- This includes working with the Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility to ensure government's digital tools and services are accessible.
- In addition, my ministry has developed a Social Stewardship Policy which articulates how social stewardship is reflected in real estate services through programs which support health and safety, accessibility, diversity and inclusion, and Indigenous reconciliation.
- We define a barrier as anything that stops people with disabilities from being included. For example, some barriers can stop people from independently accessing buildings or using computer programs; even people's attitudes towards disability can be a barrier.
- For the last decade, my ministry has advanced an Accessibility Program – focused on removing barriers to ensure public sector employees and the public have better access to our buildings.
- Part of my ministry's Accessibility Program also includes efforts to ensure universal and gender-inclusive access to

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washrooms in government facilities. Public-facing washrooms are being addressed as a priority.

- We partnered with the Rick Hansen Foundation to improve building access to a standard beyond the BC Building Code.
- The Rick Hansen Foundation assessments have helped inform improvements and changes to guidelines, standards, and investment decisions to improve access to government facilities and enhance services for citizens.
- Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification standards are now incorporated in the technical standards the Ministry uses for all new building construction and major retrofits. My team has also created new guidelines for washroom construction to make our spaces more accessible and inclusive for the people who work in and visit our buildings.

Questions and Answers:

1) What has CITZ done to make government buildings more accessible?

- My ministry is responsible for advancing health and safety, accessibility, diversity and inclusion, innovation, customer service, and Indigenous reconciliation in government operations. This includes everything from real estate, procurement, IM/IT, and front counter services.
- CITZ has been working for many years to make government buildings more inclusive and accessible. Since 2012, my ministry has delivered the Accessibility Program, which

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focuses on removing barriers to ensure public sector employees and the public have better access to our buildings.

- **POLICY:** To strengthen this work, my ministry has created and applies a Social Stewardship Policy to all its work. We endorsed the policy in 2020.
 - This policy formalizes and enables our commitments to advance Social Stewardship in government buildings. It creates structure and oversight to address social stewardship in balance with environmental and financial responsibilities.
- **PARTNERSHIP:** In 2017, my ministry partnered with the Rick Hansen Foundation so that we could improve building access to a standard beyond the BC Building Code. The Rick Hansen Foundation framework defines meaningful accessibility in buildings in their entirety, not separate elements like doors or washrooms.
 - CITZ conducted Rick Hansen Foundation assessments in 73 government buildings. The assessment results are applied to decision making criteria, investment plans, and guidelines and standards for real estate projects in CITZ.
- **PROGRAM:** In 2020, my Ministry took the Accessibility Program one step further and developed the Buildings for People: Accessibility Program. It articulates our plan to improve accessibility beyond the BC Building Code and align with the *Accessible British Columbia Act* (Accessible BC Act).

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- The strategy is based on three pillars:
 - 1. Building improvements,
 - 2. Developing standards and verifying performance,
 - 3. Culture change and awareness to support the program goals.
- INVESTMENTS: Over the past three years my ministry has invested over \$24 million in accessibility projects across our real estate portfolio (FY 22/23: \$16.9 million; FY 23/24: \$4.6 million; FY 24/25: \$3.3 million).
 - RPD worked closely with the Rick Hansen Foundation to integrate the RHF accessibility criteria into our investment planning program. This project has strengthened our capital planning process and allows us to identify which building systems contribute directly to accessibility ensuring those systems are balanced against other priorities.
- ACTIONS: Together, the Social Stewardship Policy and Buildings for People Strategy structure decision-making around real estate services. Specific outcomes include:
 - Formalizing accessibility as a strategic driver in our investment plan for 2024/2025 (added to the existing building condition driver), enabling the prioritization of accessibility in real estate projects.
 - Collaborating with client ministries to apply Rick Hansen

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Foundation information and support ministry-specific plans for accessibility and inclusion.

- Creating guides and strengthening the standards for projects in government buildings, e.g., Real Property Division's Technical Standards, signage guidelines and washroom facilities standards, so that all projects consider accessibility, even if it is not a strategic driver.
- Creating and applying accessibility evaluation criteria to procure leased and owned spaces.
- Including access to universal and gender-inclusive washrooms in real estate projects, with public-facing washrooms a priority.
- Using information gathered through Government's Accessibility Feedback Tool my ministry has been coordinating actions needed to address building accessibility issues reported by staff and citizens of B.C.
- **PROJECTS:** Examples of projects completed or underway under the Buildings for People Strategy, include:
 - Wood Innovation and Design Centre (WIDC) in Prince George. We increased signage, installed guardrails, and increased visual contrast for navigation. The building received Accessibility Certified Gold; the highest level of certification available through the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program. In addition, two projects were completed this past year at the WIDC building, increasing accessibility on outdoor

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decks.

- North Vancouver Courthouse. We spent approximately \$1.2 million upgrading washrooms at the North Vancouver Courthouse. Upgrades included one new universal and accessible staff washroom, eight washrooms upgraded to meet accessibility requirements, and relocation of water fountains to more accessible locations for all.
- 865 Hornby Street in Vancouver. We created a designated area of refuge (to increase accessibility for those in need of evacuation assistance) and installed an evacuation chair for staff and citizens with mobility impairment to evacuate safely in case of emergencies.
- Victoria Courthouse. Approximately \$1.2 million is being invested in accessibility upgrades, including upgrading the emergency systems (accessible pull stations, audio and visual fire alarms, and smoke detectors), accessible signage, and two accessible and gender-inclusive washrooms – one for staff and one for citizens. This project is on track to be completed in 2024.
- A project is in the design phase for the Kelowna Law Courts that will see the washrooms, signage and wayfinding, and emergency systems upgraded to meet the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification requirements.
- A fire alarm renewal project in Burnaby Correctional Facility will include scope to comply with the Rick

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Hansen Accessibility Certification guidelines for signage.

- Similar accessibility projects and upgrades will also be considered and prioritized when we are doing any major renovations to our buildings.

2) How much has CITZ spent on building infrastructure to support accessibility?

- Since 2012, my ministry has made ongoing investments to improve the accessibility of our buildings in the owned and leased portfolio.
- For the 2024/25 investment plan, \$3.3 million has been allocated to accessibility improvements in government buildings.
- The funding is allocated to building element upgrades such as washroom upgrades (\$750,000), emergency system upgrades (\$447,000), and signage and wayfinding (\$188,000), aligning with the priority areas outlined in our Buildings for People: Accessibility Program.
- 74 per cent of these improvements will be made in courthouses and correctional facilities.
- In 2023/24, my ministry invested approximately \$4.6 million in accessibility, with particular focus on emergency system upgrades (\$1.8 million), washroom upgrades (\$1.7 million), and signage and wayfinding (\$325,000).
 - 76 per cent of this investment was in courthouses and correction facilities.

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- 8 single-stall washrooms have been created with this investment.
- Funding for these projects comes from our existing budget.

3) What work is underway in CITZ to support accessibility?

- My ministry has several initiatives underway to support accessibility:
 - The Government Digital Experience Division supports digital accessibility by:
 - Providing an online Accessibility and Inclusion Toolkit that shows public servants how to create accessible digital content like websites, reports, and presentations.
 - Offering digital accessibility audit services for things like websites and mobile apps and offers digital accessibility training for public servants.
 - Offering web style guidelines and plain language training to help ministries plan, design and improve their web content with universal access in mind. Setting the digital accessibility standard for government websites and online tools to meet industry standards and the internationally recognized guidelines for web accessibility.
 - Offering accessible web platforms like gov.bc.ca and engage.gov.bc.ca to all Government.

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- The Connecting British Columbia program helps fund infrastructure required to deliver high-speed internet connectivity to rural and remote areas of the province, including supporting digital readiness, for local governments, Indigenous and rural communities.
- Service BC has improved accessibility of the BC Services Card App with Send Video which enables people to verify their identity without making an in-person visit.
 - The shift to video provides equitable access to those from urban, rural, or remote areas and means we are better able to accommodate more individuals.
 - Additional communication options include screen readers, text-to-speech, sign language and handwritten responses to assist those who have visual, hearing or speech impairments, and caregivers are able to provide assistance in order to complete the identity verification.
- The Procurement and Supply Division has several accessibility initiatives. King's Printer can offer Braille Printing for people with visual impairments. The BC Bid Replacement Project ensures public-facing pages are compliant with accessibility standards and guidelines. In addition, our solicitation templates are now using BC Sans as a font which contains support for multiple languages, including Indigenous languages in B.C.
- The Real Property Division (RPD) has developed the

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Social Stewardship Policy and Buildings for People: Accessibility Program in cooperation with the Rick Hansen Foundation to remove barriers in government buildings and increase inclusivity.

- RPD continues to grow Social Stewardship work in government buildings with the development of two new programs focusing on Indigenous Reconciliation and Diversity & Inclusion.

4) How do you plan for and prioritize accessibility projects?

- My ministry's Accessibility Program identifies three pathways to achieve accessibility objectives and move towards the long-term vision of access for everyone to government buildings in B.C.
 - Building Improvements: Using technical standards to ensure inclusive and accessible elements are incorporated from building design to implementation.
 - Standards and Verification of Performance: Partnering with service providers and leaders like the Rick Hansen Foundation to inventory accessibility opportunities.
 - Culture Change: Educating staff and citizens with awareness communications to support the goals of the program such as implementing gender-inclusive washrooms.
- While all government facilities are compliant with the BC Building Code, there are several examples where government spaces need to go beyond code requirements. These include

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front counter height adjustments, access to gender-inclusive washrooms, and emergency systems that will adequately notify all patrons in case of an emergency evacuation.

- Based on research and a pilot project in partnership with the Rick Hansen Foundation where a sample of government buildings were assessed for accessibility, improvement efforts currently focus on the following areas:
 - Washrooms
 - Signage, Wayfinding and Communications
 - Emergency Systems
- My team is developing a methodology to prioritize accessibility projects to ensure a coordinated and defensible approach to improving access to government buildings.
- For the 2024/25 investment plan, \$3.3 million has been allocated to accessibility improvements in government buildings.
- The funding is allocated to building element upgrades such as washroom upgrades (\$750,000), emergency system upgrades (\$447,000), and signage and wayfinding (\$188,000), aligning with the priority areas outlined in our Buildings for People: Accessibility Program.
- 74 per cent of these improvements will be made in courthouses and correctional facilities.
- In 2023/24, my ministry invested approximately \$4.6 million in

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accessibility, with particular focus on emergency system upgrades (\$1.8 million), washroom upgrades (\$1.7 million), and signage and wayfinding (\$325,000).

5) How are funds used to improve accessibility allocated?

- The funds for accessibility projects come from our existing budget. We advance accessibility across the building portfolio by incorporating accessibility upgrades into existing facility improvement projects.
- We work closely with its primary service provider, CBRE, and ministry clients to assess the current level of accessibility across the building portfolio and to determine where investments should be made.
- We determine how to allocate our funding to improve accessibility in three ways:
 1. We determine which buildings are a high priority for accessibility investments. We apply prioritization criteria like building function, building condition, and location to make this decision.
 2. We focus on investing in three priority areas identified in the Rick Hansen Foundation assessments.
 - These are the elements of our buildings that frequently require the most significant investment to improve accessibility. The priority areas are: Sanitary Facilities (e.g., washrooms, shower or change facilities), Signage and Wayfinding, and Emergency Systems. We include

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these elements in our building condition assessments.

3. As a project develops, we identify opportunities to improve accessibility outcomes within the existing budget and project scope. We also direct project partners to apply our building and design standards (e.g., Real Property Division Technical Standards, which incorporate the Rick Hansen method to determine meaningful accessibility, Sanitary Facilities Guidelines, design guidelines for signage). We ensure project managers implement our priorities.

6) How much will this work cost? How does the government plan to fund this work?

- In alignment with the Accessible BC Act and government's accessibility plan, we will continue to advance prioritized accessibility opportunities across the portfolio within existing budget envelopes, and coordinate with other ministries to seek additional funding to support this work in the years ahead.
- My ministry will be investing \$3.3 million in accessibility upgrade projects over the 2024/2025 fiscal year.

7) How does the *Accessible British Columbia Act* impact the Buildings for People: Accessibility Program?

- The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SPDR) directs the work associated with the Act via the Accessibility Directorate. Government's accessibility plan will assist with the delivery of the Accessibility Program and my

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ministry will work closely with the Accessibility Directorate.

- Planning is underway to determine the most efficient and effective way to address areas of improvement identified by the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification pilot across the portfolio. This plan will ensure we are ready to implement additional requirements and targets set by the legislation.
- As outlined in the *Accessible British Columbia Act*, the Province is committed to the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that hinder the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society. The Accessibility Program will be updated every three years until we achieve this success.
- Improving accessibility and inclusivity is an ongoing and continuous process. Working with partners and stakeholders, the Accessibility Program is an important first step to acknowledge the rights of the people in British Columbia to have an equitable, welcoming, and safe experience when they work in or visit a government building.
- The Social Stewardship Policy and the Buildings for People: Accessibility Program will be updated to align with government's accessibility plan to implement standards set out by the legislation and ensure we are on track to be a truly accessible and inclusive province.

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8) How did CITZ contribute to Government's Accessibility Plan under the Accessible BC Act?

- Under the Accessibility Act, SDPR's Accessibility Directorate worked with the Provincial Accessibility Committee and ministries across government to develop Government's Accessibility Plan 2022/23-2024/25, and planning for the 2025/26 – 2027/28 Accessibility Plan.
- CITZ collaborated with the Accessibility Directorate to contribute to Government's Accessibility Plan, specifically for Priority 1: Creating a Culture of Accessibility, Priority 2: Information and Communications, and Priority 3: Buildings, Infrastructure, and Public Spaces.
- Under Priority 1, CITZ co-leads this priority with PSA, and is responsible for the following: Support accessibility leadership in the public service through the Accessibility Community of Practice. PSA leads the support for the Employee Accessibility Advisory Council.
- Under Priority 2, CITZ is responsible for the following:
 - Funding partnership with government of Canada to connect all remaining rural households in the province to high-speed Internet by 2027;
 - Redesign government online public services and webpages to make them more streamlined and accessible. Make sure government websites meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, level AA; and
 - Remove barriers to identity verification process of the

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BC services card, which provides access to government services for B.C. residents.

- Under Priority 2, CITZ will continue to work with ministries to make their web content fully accessible. CITZ will also continue to connect the remaining under-served homes in the province to high-speed internet services by 2027.
- Under Priority 3, CITZ is responsible for the following: Identify, prioritize, plan and implement investments to enhance the accessibility of government spaces. Improved access to washrooms and inclusivity will be a focus of this work.
- Under Priority 3, CITZ will contribute to the following: continue to invest in accessibility improvements, with a particular focus on emergency systems, washrooms, and signage and wayfinding.
- CITZ is moving accessibility forward as Government's Accessibility Plan continues to evolve; RPD is committed to advancing the Buildings for People Program by identifying, prioritizing, planning, and implementing investments to enhance the accessibility of government spaces whenever possible. Improved access to washrooms and inclusivity is a focus of this work. This is outlined in three pathways:
 - *Building improvements* represent the physical changes to the space we are making.

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- *Standards and verification of performance* are the tools we measure our work against and the partners we collaborate with.
- *Culture change* is ensuring the people who work in and visit our buildings are represented and treated equitably and with respect in our facilities.
- As Government's Accessibility Plan is updated over time, the Buildings for People: Accessibility Program will continue to align and highlight government's strategic priorities.

Contact:

Sunny Dhaliwal	ADM	Real Property Division	250 380-8311
Sheila Robinson	ADM	Service BC	604 908-1401
Walter Moser	A/ADM	Government Digital Experience	Government Financial Information
Teri Spaven	ADM	Procurement Supply Division	

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Title: Prince George Youth Custody Centre Future Use

Revised: Date of last revision, January 18, 2024

Key Messages:

- The Ministry of Citizens' Services oversees government-owned properties.
- The Province announced on November 16th, 2023, that the Prince George Youth Custody Services program located at the 1211 Gunn Road facility will be closing effective March 31, 2024.
- After the closure, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) will continue to temporarily operate with a reduced floorplan using the main building until a permanent solution is found for the interim holding of youth.
- My Ministry oversees government-owned properties.
- We have a process in place to determine the future strategy for repurposing this asset and land once the building is fully vacated, which includes assessing the needs of our citizens and continuing to incorporate feedback from interested stakeholders.
- We will look at options for a new use from groups both within government, and outside government and will consult with local First Nations and the City of Prince George on a new opportunity for the site.

This material will be proactively released.

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- We look forward to hearing from stakeholders and appreciate their interest.

Questions and Answers:

1) What are specific asset amenities in each building?

- The amenities of the buildings on the property contribute to its potential future uses and include:

Name	Description	Size (Sq. Mt.)	Yr Built	Kitchens	Bedrooms	Washrooms
Main Building	Single-storey building that contains four inmate living units, gymnasium, secure yards, classrooms, vocational shop, kitchen, administration wing, and mechanical service rooms.	4,854	1986	3 kitchens (1 main kitchen, 1 staff kitchen and 1 kitchen in a classroom)	52 bedrooms	40 washroom combinations
Bowron House	Single-storey wood framed building that is currently vacant.	272	1995	1 main kitchen	12 bedrooms.	4 washroom combinations
Log Cabin	Two-storey wood framed log cabin. It is open space previously used for youth meetings and equipment storage.	49	1995	None	None	None

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2) What have been the previous expenditures of Ministry of Citizens' Services?

- My ministry's expenditures are related to ongoing building operating costs and one-time project costs. This includes operations and maintenance costs, utilities, property taxes, building amortizations, and tenant improvements.
- Our previous fiscal year expenditures were:

2018/19	\$ 1,347,502
2019/20	\$ 1,088,445
2020/21	\$ 908,162
2021/22	\$ 936,569
2022/23	\$ 1,055,385

3) Are there plans to utilize the vacant space while MCFD temporarily occupies the main building?

- Not at this time. Any requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration factors such as the sensitive nature, duration, and potential impact on the interim Youth Custody Services program.

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4) On January 16, 2024, the Premier announced that B.C. will fund consultation on a Northern Centre of Excellence for Children and Youth. Will the 1211 Gunn Road facility be used for this centre of excellence?

- My ministry will look at options for a new use for the facility from groups both inside and outside of government.
- While my ministry is responsible for the facility, it will be a partner ministry or third party that will be responsible for the programming delivered at the site.
- My ministry will facilitate discussions with other ministries and government agencies, the City of Prince George, and local First Nations to deliver programming at the site.

5) Other organizations have expressed interest in being able to utilize the facility, can they take occupancy of the former youth centre?

- My ministry will look at options for a new use for the facility from groups both inside and outside of government.
- While my ministry is responsible for the facility, it will be a partner ministry or third party that will be responsible for the programming delivered at the site.
- My ministry will facilitate discussions with other ministries and government agencies, the City of Prince George and local First Nations about future uses at the site.

This material will be proactively released.

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6) When will you announce the new use?

- My ministry will be facilitating discussions with other government ministries/agencies and local First Nations and the City of Prince George on the future use of the facility.
- Any new proposal will require a business case. We recognize the community interest in knowing the new use and we will announce the plans after discussions have been completed and final programming is approved.

7) Has any party expressed interest in the asset?

- Over the past few months, my ministry has received some interest in the property.
- My ministry will be facilitating discussions with other government ministries/agencies and local First Nations and the City of Prince George on the future use of the facility.
- My ministry has a robust process in place for managing surplus properties and ensuring compliance with government's Core Policy, and recommendations made by the Auditor General in its July 2018 audit. Under the Surplus Properties Program, the Ministry of Citizens' Services has implemented the 90-day Enhanced Referral Process ("ERP"), which matches ministry and agency demands with existing surplus properties.
- These options and business case[s] will be brought forward for government's final consideration.

This material will be proactively released.

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8) Will you use it to ease over-crowded correction facilities?

- Questions regarding corrections should be directed to Public Safety and the Solicitor General. They have not yet been in Estimates so you will have time to canvass that Minister around corrections occupancy and future plans.

9) Will you sell it? Who makes the final decision on the use?

- My ministry will be facilitating discussions with other government ministries/agencies and local First Nations and the City of Prince George on the future use of the facility.
- My ministry has a robust process in place for managing surplus properties and ensuring compliance with government's Core Policy, and recommendations made by the Auditor General in its July 2018 audit. Under the Surplus Properties Program, the Ministry of Citizens' Services has implemented the 90-day Enhanced Referral Process ("ERP"), which matches ministry and agency demands with existing surplus properties.
- These options and business case[s] will be brought forward for government's final consideration.

10) What is the property value of the land and buildings?

- As of July 1, 2023, BC Assessment has appraised the property at \$7.97 million.

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11) Do you have plans for the adjacent land owned by the Province?

- My ministry's real estate portfolio also includes the adjacent land parcel of approximately 14 acres. Currently, there are leases in place with telecommunications and broadcasting companies for the placement of radio towers. A water tower, owned by the City of Prince George, is also situated on this land.

12) Why did MCFD close the Youth Custody Services program?

- My ministry is responsible for enabling our client's program/service delivery through providing necessary real estate needs. The Ministry of Children and Family Development would be best positioned to respond to this question that is specific to program delivery.

Contact: ADM

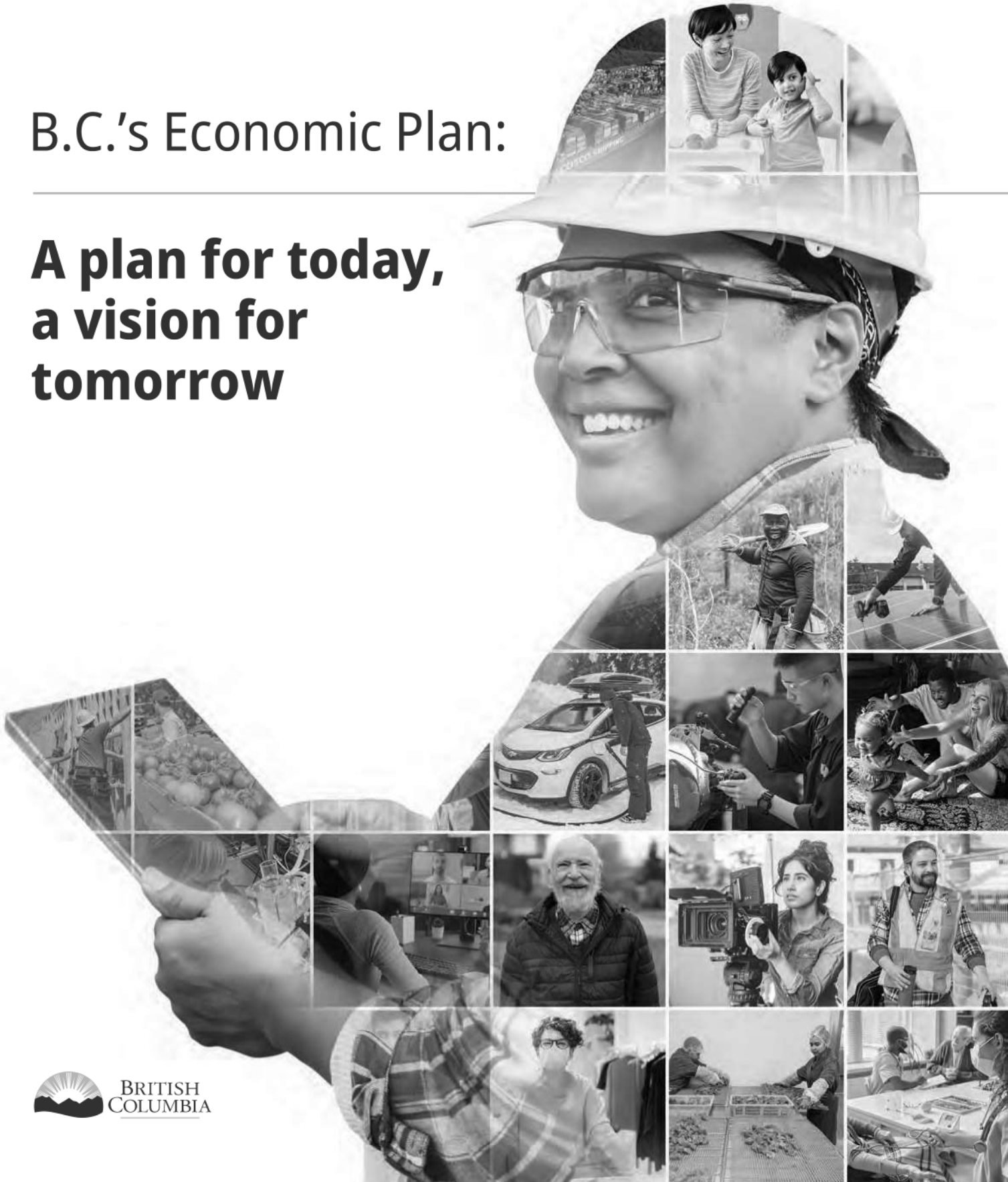
Sunny Dhaliwal

Assistant Deputy
Minister

Real Property Division 250-380-8311

B.C.'s Economic Plan:

A plan for today, a vision for tomorrow





Joint letter from the Premier and Minister

From the start, our government has worked to make life better for people.

We've expanded post-secondary education and made child care more available and affordable. We've cut ICBC rates, eliminated bridge tolls and cracked down on housing speculators to keep life affordable for families.

We're working with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples towards reconciliation and leading on climate action. We're modernizing our forest sector to ensure it remains both economically and ecologically sustainable for future generations.

When the pandemic hit, we responded by providing more support per capita to people and businesses than any other province.

These actions have helped B.C. through the pandemic and into a strong economic recovery. Today, B.C. is a national economic leader, just as we were when the pandemic began. More British Columbians are working now than before the pandemic with 100,000 jobs added in 2021. Last year saw the largest interprovincial migration in 28 years with more families making B.C. their home.

Our immediate focus remains getting British Columbians through COVID-19 together. The pandemic was not a one-off event. It has fundamentally changed our outlook and priorities in ways that have profound implications for all of us.



Honourable John Horgan,
Premier of British Columbia

Our core values haven't changed. But the pandemic and toxic-drug crisis, together with floods, fires and extreme temperatures, has underlined the need for a renewed approach to economic policy – a long-term approach that looks 10 to 15 years ahead and results in a more sustainable and inclusive province for all British Columbians.

Because we can't go back to the way things were before. That's why we developed this plan.

Following months of consultation with British Columbians, the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) calls on British Columbia to achieve two big goals: *inclusive growth* and *clean growth*.

The plan lays out specific "missions" to meet these goals, guiding policy decisions in the years ahead. More immediate actions will close the digital divide; get goods to market faster; increase domestic manufacturing; add value to our natural resources; support our booming innovation sector; and help position B.C. as a world-leading supplier of high-demand, low-carbon goods and services.

The [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) also includes a generational commitment to develop the talent B.C. needs to grow and innovate across our economy.

This is a plan for today, and a vision for tomorrow. Our ambition is to build the province we all want for ourselves and future generations. One that fosters innovation and ensures a strong future for resource workers. A high-care, low-carbon economy that works for all of us.



Ravi Kahlon,
Minister of Jobs, Economic
Recovery and Innovation



An Inclusive, Sustainable and Innovative Economy that Works for People

British Columbia has a small, open economy with many advantages, including being home to two of the country's largest ports, abundant resources, incredible natural beauty, a competitive business climate, strong public services, and a shared commitment to community.

Of all British Columbia's many advantages, our most important asset is people.

And it's people – everyday British Columbians – who are at the heart of this plan. Because if an economy is not working for people, then it's simply not working.

Over the last four years, supporting people has helped B.C.'s economy grow.

Partnering with First Nations, Indigenous Peoples and organizations as respected leaders in our economy to work towards reconciliation, is creating new economic

opportunities throughout our province.

Modernizing our forest sector will ensure forestry remains a source of good jobs and economic security for communities across B.C.

Tackling the climate emergency is driving economic innovation and new clean jobs.

Creating thousands of new spaces at B.C.'s colleges and universities is helping businesses secure talent, increase productivity and improve competitiveness.

Expanding affordable child care makes it easier for businesses to hire by helping families to balance the needs of home and work.

Accelerating capital investments to the highest level ever is upgrading our schools and hospitals; modernizing critical transportation networks and creating tens of thousands of good jobs.

Through the Community Benefit Agreements and new training opportunities for people historically excluded from economic opportunity, key investments in infrastructure are both producing robust growth, and ensuring more people share in the benefits.

At a time of global upheaval, B.C.'s economy is providing certainty and attracting investment from around the world. Last year's \$4.3-billion investment by world-class Newcrest Mining in B.C. is just one example of strong investor confidence.

B.C. also experienced a surge last year in private-technology-startups valued at more than \$1-billion.

Overall, 2021 was one of the best years ever for raising capital by B.C. companies.

These facts point to the enormous potential for B.C. to thrive in a carbon-constrained world. Our plan will help B.C. companies grow from this demand, establishing sustainability as a foundation for future jobs and growth.

Because a strong economy and a healthy society go hand in hand.

The pandemic and all that we have been through over the last two years has brought this truth into sharp focus. And it has reminded us how much more work lies ahead to build an inclusive, sustainable and innovative economy that works for everyone.

The [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) sets out a clear vision for tomorrow, and building off previous plans, charts a path to get us there by making your life better today.

THE PURPOSE OF OUR ECONOMY

Economic growth is not an end in itself.

British Columbia's gross domestic product could outpace the world, but if people aren't feeling the benefits of the economy in their lives and in their communities, then the economy may be growing, but it's not working.

The [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) says the well-being of the more than five million people who call B.C. home is our most important economic advantage. Healthy, inclusive societies where wealth and opportunity are broadly shared are more productive, competitive, and innovative

than societies where inequality is high. They are also more resilient.

This core idea grounds the goals, missions, and actions outlined in this plan. It brings them together in a renewed vision for a more innovative and sustainable economy where each of us can realize our true potential in empowered and inclusive communities. At a time of great global uncertainty, the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) asserts that an economy built for all is an economy built to succeed.



What was important to participants in the virtual engagement sessions:



AFFORDABLE HOUSING



CLIMATE EMERGENCY



HEALTH CARE



CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE



IMMIGRATION



RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



CHILD CARE



SKILLED WORKFORCE



ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL STANDARDS



MODERNIZED VALUE-ADDED NATURAL RESOURCES

Built by British Columbians

The [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) is the result of extensive engagement with British Columbians from every region of the province and from all walks of life – business, labour, First Nations and Indigenous leaders, municipalities, not-for-profits, universities and colleges, entrepreneurs, environmentalists, and many others.

At a time of increased polarization around the world, the strong consensus expressed by such a diverse range of British Columbians through our engagements was remarkable.

British Columbians agree that the central aim for B.C.'s long-term plan needs to be economic growth shared by all.

To that end, we agree that diversity is a critical and enduring strength; that rights reconciliation and lasting partnerships with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples is a fundamental condition of long-term economic progress; that developing and attracting talent is the primary source of economic innovation; that increased immigration is good for our economy; and that Environmental, Social and Governance values (ESG) offer a tremendous opportunity for B.C. companies to showcase their advantages.

British Columbians agree natural resources are an enormous economic advantage. We also share a deep commitment to bold and immediate action to tackle the climate crisis.

British Columbians told us they believe governments have a central role in providing services and addressing social problems, as well as in fostering innovation, tackling fundamental challenges like climate change, and helping set the direction for economic growth.

Of course, British Columbians look at our economy and these issues from different perspectives. Views vary on the combination of policies and incentives to achieve lasting economic prosperity.

What has been clear through the pandemic was expressed again in our engagement with British Columbians. We share a common ambition for communities and our province – an ambition on which this plan – its long-term vision, immediate measures, and the metrics by which we will track our progress – was built.

Who We Heard From

Engagement sessions were held over a nine-week period during the summer of 2021. Thirty-three virtual sessions were held with more than 330 stakeholders representing business, industry, labour, and social organizations across B.C. Forty-four written submissions were received from participants and other interested stakeholders. In the fall of 2021, a series of focused virtual engagement sessions were held with First Nations and Indigenous organizations.

Inclusive Growth and Clean Growth

The pandemic has taught us we have a collective capacity to confront big challenges. The extraordinary events of the past two years – flood, fires, heat domes, a global pandemic and the toxic drug crisis – have brought two of these challenges into sharp focus.

First, COVID-19's disproportionate impact on lower-income and marginalized British Columbians has highlighted the tremendous health and economic costs of inequality.

Too many British Columbians lack access to the economic opportunities that are a pillar of a strong and resilient society. In a world where the skills, talents and ambitions of people are one of B.C.'s most important assets, expanding economic opportunity through inclusive growth is both a moral and economic imperative.

Second, the climate emergency is here. Floods, heat domes and fires have brought home the devastating impact of climate change on our economy and society. If we didn't fully appreciate it before, we must now: the world is turning quickly toward an emphasis on sustainable growth. B.C. must continue to be a leader in the fight against climate change.

These twin challenges are also opportunities for British Columbia to lead in shaping tomorrow's high-skill, competitive, low-carbon economy. Tackling inequality and meeting our climate commitments doesn't come at the cost of economic growth, but rather are an accelerant for good jobs, innovation, and economic security across B.C.

In this important way, the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) represents a fundamental re-orientation of economic policy making in B.C.

For these reasons, the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) sets forth ***inclusive growth and clean growth*** as the overarching goals towards which everything in the plan is aimed.

The six missions and new priorities forming the heart of this plan are all strategically chosen to meet these two fundamental economic imperatives.

Organizing the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) in this way gives it the focus required to drive change, prioritize decisions, and track progress in the disciplined execution of specific policies across government.

Some of these policies are new and some are underway. But they are all pointed in the same direction: towards a stronger B.C.

"An economy built for all is an economy built to succeed."

- Premier John Horgan



INCREASING B.C.'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Effective competitiveness is dependent upon a wide range of factors that drive economic productivity. For a small open economy like British Columbia's, factors such as access to talent and capital, competitive tax rates, high quality physical and social infrastructure, strong public healthcare and a business climate that supports innovation are key to gaining advantage in the global marketplace.

The [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) improves B.C.'s long-term competitiveness through a range of measures aimed at nurturing talent, promoting investment, strengthening infrastructure, and fostering innovation in both traditional and new industries.

The Future Ready: Skills for the Jobs of Tomorrow plan will help equip British Columbians with the knowledge and skills they require for the jobs of the future. Expanded child care will make it easier for parents to participate in the workforce. The InBC Investment Corp will provide capital to companies that seek to grow in the province. Closing the digital divide will enable every British Columbian and business to access high-speed internet. Reducing carbon emissions while adding value to our resources will create new opportunities for economic innovation. And B.C. will continue to lead the effort to improve trade among the provinces.

Together, these and other actions in the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) will help B.C. to compete and thrive in an ever-changing global economy.

B.C.'s Economic Plan: A plan for today, a vision for tomorrow

INCLUSIVE GROWTH



Supporting People & Families

- Investing in people and families to make life more affordable
- Delivering the services - like health care and child care - you can count on
- Expanding opportunities for education and training



Building Resilient Communities

- Helping communities thrive with modern infrastructure resilient to changes in the climate and the economy
- Building affordable housing, new schools and hospitals
- Making sure every community in B.C. has access to high-speed internet



Advancing True, Lasting & Meaningful Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

- Working to advance our commitments to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples
- Partnering with First Nations and Indigenous communities to support new economic initiatives
- Acknowledging, respecting and upholding Indigenous rights, First Nations title and Indigenous control of their land and resources

New actions

- Launching the Future Ready: Skills for the Jobs of Tomorrow plan
- Accelerating the timeline to connect all B.C. communities to high-speed internet
- Creating a Small Business Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan
- Collaborating on an Indigenous economic development agency
- Building a new Trades and Technology Complex at the British Columbia Institute of Technology

B.C.'s Economic Plan features two key goals
and six missions that will shape our economy to work for everyone

CLEAN GROWTH



Meeting B.C.'s Climate Commitments

- Delivering on B.C.'s commitment to reduce climate pollution and build a cleaner B.C.
- Helping people and business transition to clean energy solutions
- Supporting industries to become low-carbon



Leading on Environmental & Social Responsibility

- Helping develop, promote, and market environmentally and socially responsible goods and services
- Positioning B.C. to compete and win in a global economy that puts a premium on ESG
- Investing in the development of low carbon goods and technology



Fostering Innovation Across Our Economy

- Helping B.C.'s high-tech sector find talent and scale-up
- Creating new manufacturing opportunities in an innovative economy
- Adding value to natural resources

New actions

- Developing a Mass Timber Action Plan
- Creating a Life Sciences and Biomanufacturing Strategy
- Engaging on a Trade Diversification Strategy
- Establishing Integrated Marketplaces to amplify innovation and connect local businesses with customers
- Creating an Industrial and Manufacturing Action Plan
- Establishing an ESG Centre of Excellence to promote Environmental, Social and Governance principles for products and services
- Creating an Agritech Centre of Excellence
- Initiating a Goods Movement Strategy



Inclusive Growth

MISSION 1: SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

The well-being of people and families across B.C. is the point of a growing economy. No matter how much wealth is created, if people and families aren't benefiting, then the economy is failing.

Through the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#), our government is supporting people and families across a range of initiatives to make life better and more secure. We're taking action to reward hard work, make life more affordable, help parents balance the needs of work and home, expand opportunities for education and training, and support the most vulnerable.

This mission will result in more cohesive communities where opportunities and wealth are shared more broadly. British Columbians will have the skills they need to drive productivity in an innovative and growing economy; household incomes will go further and those traditionally under-represented will have the supports needed to be able to engage more fully in our economic and civic life.

KEY ACTIONS

- Keeping people safe as we navigate through and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Cutting ICBC rates, eliminating MSP premiums, free bus travel for children, eliminating interest on student loans, and taxing housing speculators.
- Expanding quality affordable child care.
- Creating thousands of new spaces at our universities, colleges and institutes, expanding co-op programs and graduate student scholarships.
- Supporting workers and rural communities transition into new industries.
- Increasing income and disability assistance, doubling of the senior's supplement and supporting vulnerable families.
- Implementing five days of paid sick leave to help keep businesses safe, open and thriving.
- Increasing the minimum wage and closing the gender pay gap.
- Delivering on a Pathway to Hope, a roadmap for making mental health and addictions care better for people.
- Introducing new anti-racism data legislation that will pave the way for fair and better services.



Median Hourly Wage Rate



Courtesy: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0063-01 Employee wages by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality.





Inclusive Growth

MISSION 2: BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Jobs and economic opportunity flourish in communities that have the tools they need to adapt and grow in a world where challenges posed by the pace of technological innovation, the climate emergency, and global economic integration is accelerating change at a dizzying rate.

Through the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#), our government is providing communities with those tools. We're building modern economic and social infrastructure, including good schools, hospitals and affordable housing. We're making substantial investments in fire, flood and emergency event preparedness and mitigation. We're ensuring access to local food. And through CleanBC we are supporting people and businesses to transition to a carbon-neutral economy. Because resilient communities must be climate resilient.

This mission will strengthen the social and economic fabric tying communities and people together. British Columbians will be better connected to each other, the province and the world. We will continue to learn in good public schools, get treated in good public hospitals and health care facilities and enjoy more affordable living options as owners and renters. We will also lower carbon emissions and be better prepared for future climate events and natural disasters.

KEY ACTIONS

- Building 9,000 more family homes through our Housing Hub.
- Expanding transit and building modern, low-carbon economic infrastructure.
- Connecting communities to each other and the digital economy by expanding high-speed internet connectivity.
- Supporting B.C.'s next generation of construction workers with Community Benefit Agreements.
- Improving accessibility and working to remove barriers for everyone in B.C.
- Implementing the recommendations of the Tourism Task Force.
- Building health facilities like the new urgent and primary care centres, and new cancer centres in Surrey and Kamloops.
- Upgrading and building new schools across the province.
- Helping food entrepreneurs grow their businesses through shared-use equipment at Food Hubs.
- Ongoing support for B.C.'s thriving television and film industry — the greenest in the world.
- Strengthening community resilience through a new climate preparedness and adaptation strategy.



A THRIVING TOURISM INDUSTRY

People from all over the world want to visit B.C. And we are proud and welcoming hosts.

Tourism is one of B.C.'s iconic industries. It is an engine for jobs, opportunity and entrepreneurship.

Tourism employs more than 160,000 British Columbians, adds billions of dollars to GDP, and contributes to the well-being of people and communities throughout the province.

Although the last two years have been extremely challenging for tourism businesses and workers, the future for tourism is bright. Few places on earth offer the variety and richness of experiences for visitors to enjoy.

A flourishing tourism industry is a key pillar of the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#). Through Destination BC, our government is partnering with industry to meet ambitious goals for growth, sustainability and stewardship.

We are giving more visitors more reasons to travel to B.C. – from hosting world-class events to investing in B.C.'s iconic destinations and supporting Indigenous tourism opportunities. And we are ensuring that the social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits that come with a thriving tourism industry are enjoyed by all British Columbians.



BUILDING B.C.: SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, ROADS AND TRANSIT

Building, restoring and expanding infrastructure helps meet the needs of our growing population, while creating jobs and economic growth in both the short-term and the long-term.

Last year we committed to making historic levels of infrastructure investment in B.C. It will allow us to build the infrastructure B.C. needs to keep moving forward — housing, schools, hospitals, and highways. And it will create an estimated 85,000 jobs.

In addition to direct work like planning, engineering and construction jobs, infrastructure projects also provide indirect jobs and provide opportunities to develop marketable made-in-B.C. green innovation and technology.

Expanded transit infrastructure helps us meet our CleanBC targets while opening up new, cleaner, and faster modes of transportation. Integrated development around new SkyTrain stations offers opportunities to create affordable housing and local economic development. We have invested in the Broadway Subway Project and have committed to building the Surrey Langley SkyTrain Project all the way to Langley City Centre.

Finally, the disastrous flooding in 2021 reminded us that our transportation infrastructure is vital to our supply chains. We are working with all of our partners to build back climate-resilient infrastructure, designed to withstand the effects of climate change and extreme weather.





BUILDING THE HOMES WE NEED

Housing is essential infrastructure for a thriving economy that works for everyone. Living close to work, school, services and transit lowers costs for families, while reducing traffic, pollution and commute times. Good affordable housing makes life better for families and it helps employers to recruit and retain the workers they need.

For decades, federal and provincial governments stepped back from this important responsibility.

The pressure on housing is growing, as record numbers of people choose to move to B.C. for a better life. They join thousands of British Columbians looking for homes to pursue their dreams, whether starting a family, taking a job, or enrolling in a training or education program.

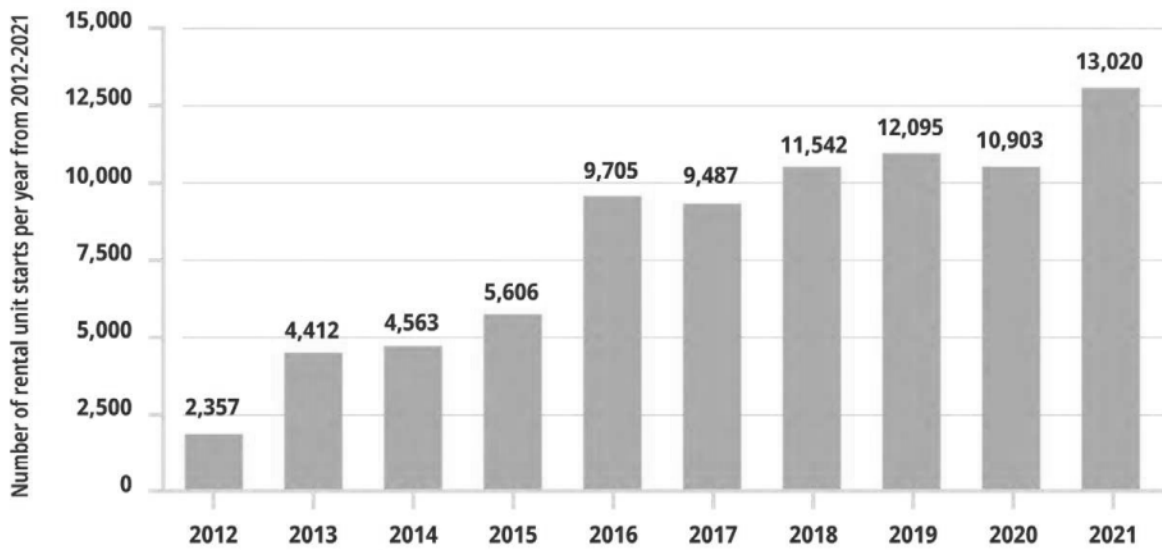
Our government is making better choices to support people. We are making the largest investment in housing in the province's history – \$7 billion to build 114,000 new affordable homes. Since 2017, nearly 32,000 of these new affordable homes have been built or are underway. Because of this investment and other initiatives more than 52,000 new homes were registered for construction last year in B.C., the highest level in

a single year since BC Housing started tracking this two decades ago. In the past five years, we have built or have in development 5,680 new on-campus student housing beds, compared to just 160 student housing units built between 2002 and 2017.

But the work isn't done. We need to build tens of thousands of new rental units and homes across the province to meet the urgent demand. We're helping municipalities streamline rezoning processes, especially near transit hubs, so badly needed housing can be built more quickly. We're also working to speed up provincial approvals to make sure they don't hold up new housing either. Local governments are also now getting funding to develop regular reports on housing needs. This ensures municipalities are planning for the future.

Affordable homes so people can work and live in their community are key to inclusive growth. Our government's programs and policies are encouraging construction of all types of homes people need. This work is helping to expand opportunities to build our growing economy in a sustainable way that supports all families and communities.

Progress on rental homes for B.C.



Courtesy: CMHC's Housing Market Information Portal





Inclusive Growth

MISSION 3: ADVANCING TRUE, LASTING AND MEANINGFUL RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Through the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#), our government is working to advance our shared commitments to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples through economic development.

We are working with Indigenous Peoples to address barriers to their full participation and leadership in all aspects of B.C.'s economy; supporting First Nations control over their own land and resources; acknowledging, respecting and upholding Indigenous rights and First Nations title; and building enduring and productive forums for Indigenous Peoples to lead and contribute to economic development initiatives.

This mission will advance lasting and meaningful reconciliation through economic development that recognizes Indigenous Peoples are leaders and partners in all aspects of the economy.

KEY ACTIONS

- Collaborating with Indigenous partners to deliver the action plan required under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
- Moving to long-term agreements, treaties and other constructive arrangements that recognize rights and advance self-determination, economic independence and prosperity.
- Partnering with First Nations for decisions on land and resource use through shared decision making.
- Engaging with First Nations in setting the long-term direction of the economy.
- Working towards an economy that respects, acknowledges and upholds Indigenous rights and First Nations title, is co-led with Indigenous Peoples, and ensures that all Indigenous Peoples have access to economic opportunities and benefit from the lands and resources in their territories.
- Partnering with Indigenous Peoples to lead the development of an economy, workforce and business climate that supports greater leadership, inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples and advances Indigenous rights, values, interests and goals.
- Collaborating and participating in ongoing, meaningful, and enduring dialogue to create a more inclusive, innovative, and sustainable economy for the benefit of present and future generations that reflects Indigenous values, interests, goals and worldviews.
- Work with Indigenous Peoples to transform the economy by supporting the rebuilding of Indigenous economies, respecting and reflecting Indigenous economic knowledge, wisdom and practice, and facilitating holistic economic sustainability that improves the well-being of all British Columbians.



PARTNERING IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Working towards lasting and meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is an economic advantage for the province.

Government's commitments to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and respect for Indigenous rights and First Nations title and traditional territories, are fundamental to B.C.'s economic future, and central to this plan.

By engaging Indigenous Peoples as respected partners in the economy, B.C. supports certainty and clarity for projects and investment decisions, leading to increased economic confidence.

Many leading companies investing in B.C. have introduced successful models based on collaborative relationships with First Nations governments.

In our engagement sessions with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples, a number of key issues and themes emerged, including persistent and systemic barriers to Indigenous participation

in the economy, ranging from cultural discrimination and racism to regulatory burdens and limited access to capital.

Indigenous participants in the consultation expressed not only a willingness, but an urgency to become full partners in the renewed B.C. economy.

The unanimous passage of the Declaration Act by all parties in the Legislature enshrined into law the fundamental rights of Indigenous Peoples in B.C. Care has been taken in designing the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) to ensure consistency between it and the Declaration Act Action Plan.

Negotiating and respecting treaties has significant implications for the provincial economy by supporting meaningful partnerships and generating economic benefits for Indigenous Peoples while also addressing rights and title.

Inclusive Growth, New Actions

Future Ready: Skills for the Jobs of Tomorrow

A skills and talent shortage looms over the B.C. economy.

Business leaders across sectors have told us very clearly that developing, attracting and retaining talent is critical for productivity, innovation and competitiveness.

The B.C. Labour Market Outlook released in early February 2022 tells the story.

Of the more than *one million job openings* in B.C. over the next 10 years:

- Almost 80 percent will require post-secondary training and education
- The highest demand jobs will be in the caring economy and scientific and technical services sector

- The demand will not be met without meaningful steps to reduce barriers keeping people out of the labour market

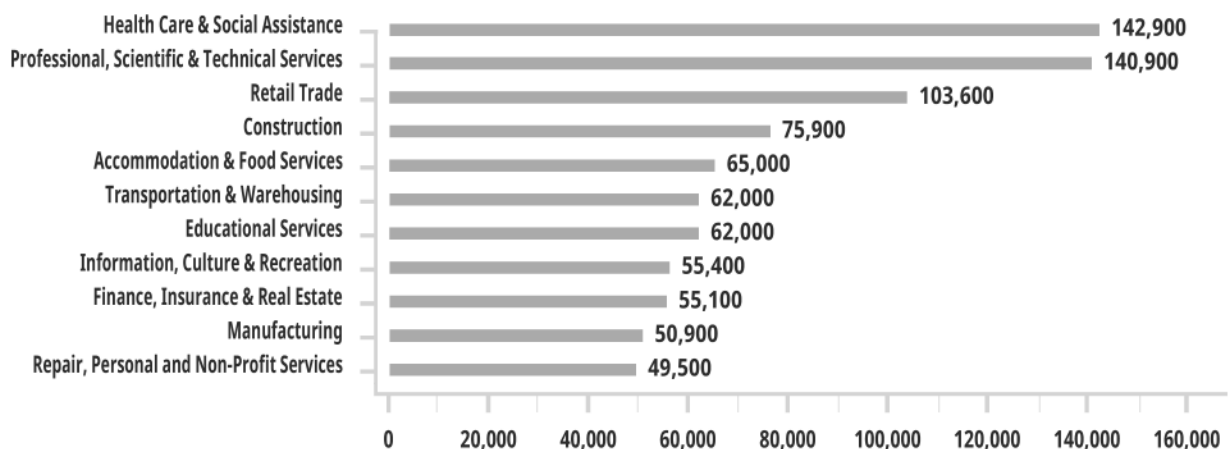
Our government is taking concrete steps to address this challenge.

We're helping today's workers upgrade their skills and train for new jobs

We've created thousands of new post-secondary tech spaces, reduced barriers to education by keeping tuition affordable, waived tuition for children in care, expanded grants, built 8,000 new student housing units, and restored compulsory apprenticeship and trades.

More needs to be done.

Job openings by Major Industry over the next decade



Courtesy: Labour Market Outlook 2021



The StrongerBC Economic Plan takes immediate action to close B.C.'s skills and talent gap with a generational commitment to accelerate talent development and skills training across the province.

The StrongerBC Economic Plan advances:

1. **The StrongerBC Training Initiatives** to support economic recovery
2. **The creation of 2,000 new tech-relevant spaces** in public post-secondary institutions on top of the 2,900 tech seats already created
3. **The expansion of student seats** in high opportunity sectors such as health care, high-tech, life sciences and agritech
4. **Support programs** to help workers, First Nations and communities through economic transition
5. **Support for Indigenous Post-Secondary Institutes** and skills training
6. **More graduate scholarships** and internships for innovation
7. **A digital services hub** so British

Columbians can more easily access education and training for in-demand jobs

8. **Expanding training** for health care workers

The plan also invests in infrastructure that helps build tomorrow's workforce, including \$136.6-million towards a new world-class ***Trades and Technology Complex on the BCIT campus.***

The new Trades and Technology Complex will give British Columbians access to resources and equipment they need to train for the tens of thousands of new, highly-skilled trade jobs that will open up in B.C. over the next 10 years.



Inclusive Growth, New Actions *continued*

The BCIT Trades and Technology Complex is one key initiative to give British Columbians the talents and skills they need for the jobs that are coming in high-tech, agrifood, transportation, health care, and sectors throughout our economy.

Over the coming months, these and other forward-looking initiatives designed to close the skills gap will be announced in coordination with Indigenous leaders, industry, labour and B.C.'s world-class post-secondary system.

Closing the Digital Divide

COVID-19 proved beyond any doubt the importance of connectivity for social inclusion and economic growth in our province.

We know high-speed internet is essential to everyone, especially in rural and Indigenous communities. Without it, many British Columbians struggle to access the same information, services and economic opportunities as those who live in urban centres.

Our government committed to closing the digital divide with record investments.

The [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) aggressively accelerates the timeline to connect all B.C. communities to high-speed internet and successfully close B.C.'s digital divide.

This will mean that businesses of all types will have the same digital economic opportunities

in rural B.C. as in larger communities. It will also see many First Nations communities get connected for the first time, advancing reconciliation and self-determination.

Supporting Small Business Diversity and Inclusion

In British Columbia, small business is big business. There are more small businesses per capita in B.C. than anywhere else in Canada.

Ninety-eight percent of B.C. businesses are small businesses. They employ more than a million British Columbians, account for 36 percent of B.C. exports and 34 percent of B.C.'s GDP. Beyond the numbers, small businesses are part of the fabric of local communities. Many of us got our first jobs at a small business, or play on a softball team sponsored by one, or just rely on expert advice from the owner when shopping.

Through the pandemic, our government has worked closely with small businesses across the province to reopen, adapt, hire and grow. We've provided hundreds of millions of dollars to small businesses so they can stay open and keep people on the payroll. We've tailored direct support for some of our hardest hit sectors, like tourism, hospitality, and the arts. And we provided additional support across a range of initiatives including help for small businesses to sell products online, scale-up their operations, and streamline regulations.



Of the many small business people affected by the pandemic, Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (IBPOC), women, persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+, immigrants and young small business owners were disproportionately impacted. The [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) will provide comprehensive support, like new entrepreneur training, to these small business people through the development of the ***Small Business Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan***.

Indigenous Economic Development Organization

Self-determination of Indigenous Peoples is essential for an economy that works for

everyone. To help ensure our investments in economic growth are grounded in reconciliation, the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) will support the co-development of an external, **Indigenous-led agency focused on Indigenous economic development**.

The intent of this Indigenous-led institution will be to support opportunities for economic development and investment for Indigenous Peoples, and guide the expansion of provincial initiatives to support First Nation communities to secure new economic opportunities. This would be undertaken in a manner that advances the implementation of the *Declaration Act*, the Action Plan and other existing agreements and constructive arrangements.

Clean Growth



MISSION 1: MEETING B.C.'S CLIMATE COMMITMENTS

The impacts of climate change are all around us. And British Columbians know that delaying is not an option.

This plan delivers on *CleanBC: Roadmap to 2030* to meet B.C.'s emissions reduction targets for 2030 and reach net-zero by 2050. In doing so, more industries and communities will be powered with clean, renewable energy.

This mission will strengthen B.C.'s ability to attract investment and build economic opportunity for British Columbians by accelerating the transition to clean energy solutions.

KEY ACTIONS

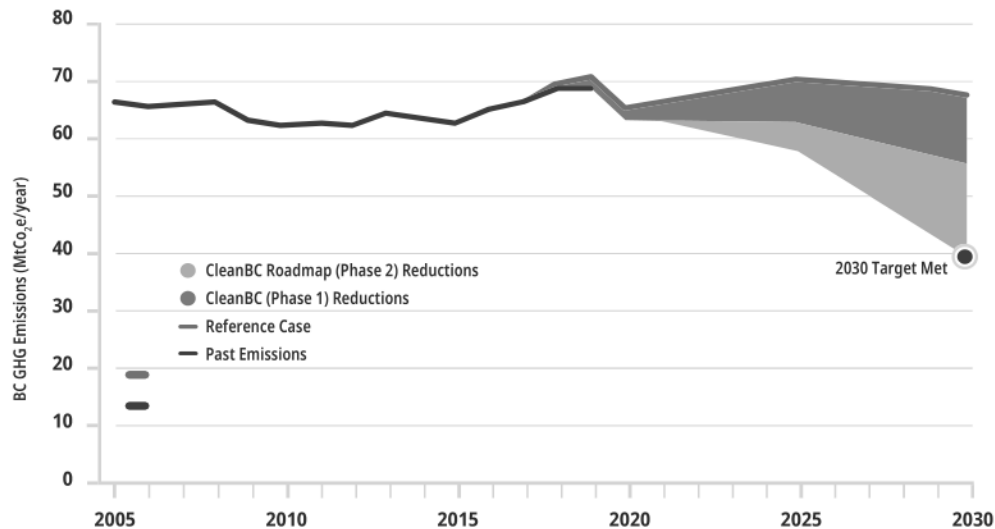
CleanBC supports innovation, growth and jobs by:

- Driving innovation in areas like clean hydrogen, the forest-based bio-economy and negative emissions technology.
- Making all new buildings zero-carbon by 2030.
- Adopting nation-leading targets for zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) by 2030 and 100% ZEVs by 2035.
- Supporting research, development, and commercialization of new clean energy technologies.
- Creating the new Centre for Innovation and Clean Energy to accelerate and scale-up B.C.-based energy technologies, including carbon capture and low carbon hydrogen.
- Developing new construction methods and building materials through the CleanBC Innovation Fund.
- Supporting industries to become cleaner and ready for opportunities in the global clean economy through the CleanBC Industry Fund and the Industrial Incentive Program.

cleanBC
OUR FUTURE. OUR POWER. OUR FUTURE.



CleanBC Emissions Reductions



Courtesy: CleanBC: Roadmap 2030 2021 p. 18

A NEW VISION FOR OUR FORESTS

Forestry is a foundation of the B.C. economy that provides good, family-supporting jobs. Our iconic old-growth forests are a cherished part of who we are as British Columbians.

Yet, for too long, short-sighted policies meant that control of B.C.'s forests was consolidated in the hands of too few and ecosystem health was not prioritized. This approach left workers and communities behind – and completely passed over First Nations.

That's why our government has a new vision for B.C.'s forests – one where our oldest and most ancient forests are protected, Indigenous Peoples are full partners in sustainable forest management, and workers and communities benefit from secure, innovative forestry jobs for generations to come.

This new approach to forests:

- Increases local control to ensure we better share all the benefits provided by B.C.'s forests
- Supports sustainable economies by transforming the sector from volume to value – with more made-in-B.C. manufacturing and fewer raw logs shipped overseas
- Advances reconciliation by creating more tenure opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and shared decision-making of forestry management



Clean Growth

MISSION 2: LEADING ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Of B.C.'s many economic advantages, the province's commitment to and reputation for environmental and social responsibility is increasingly important to improve our competitiveness and open up new markets for trade.

Through the StrongerBC Economic Plan, our government is securing B.C. as a world leader for championing corporate environmental, social and governance standards (ESG), helping British Columbians to develop, promote, and market environmentally and socially responsible goods and services. Our clean energy advantage is creating new opportunities in our electricity and natural gas sector that fit within CleanBC.

This mission will help position B.C. to compete and win in a global economy that puts a premium on ESG.

KEY ACTIONS

- Strengthening B.C.'s mining sector through the B.C. Mining Jobs Task Force to ensure environmental and regulatory excellence in mining, and the sustainable exploration for minerals needed in the new economy.
- Investing in the development of clean energy and clean technology with new initiatives such as the Centre for Innovation and Clean Energy.
- Launching a new ministry which will help ensure land-based permitting processes are transparent, timely and fair.
- Supporting low-carbon innovation and the low-carbon economy across sectors through the new InBC Investment Corp (InBC).
- Encouraging cleaner industrial operations through the CleanBC Industrial Incentive Program.





B.C.'S HYDROGEN STRATEGY

For British Columbia to meet its CleanBC goals, we must change how we produce and consume energy. When burned or used in a fuel cell, hydrogen produces no carbon emissions. It is one of the only solutions for decarbonizing sectors of the economy where direct electrification is not practical.

Therefore, renewable and low-carbon hydrogen will play an essential role in our sustainable energy future.

With our clean hydroelectricity, abundant natural resources and innovative companies, B.C. can be a world leader in the growing hydrogen economy – creating new cleantech jobs and opportunities for people across the province.

B.C. has already implemented robust policies to encourage hydrogen use in the transportation sector. The B.C. Hydrogen Strategy lays out 63 actions we will take together to speed up the

production and use of renewable and low-carbon hydrogen, and make B.C. a world leader in the growing hydrogen economy.

These actions include:

- Incentivizing the production of renewable and low-carbon hydrogen
- Developing regional hydrogen hubs where production and demand are co-located
- Financial supports for deploying fuel cell electric vehicles and infrastructure
- Expanding the use of hydrogen across different industrial sectors and applications
- Promoting the adoption of hydrogen in areas where it is most cost-effective in terms of emission reductions
- Creating the B.C. Centre for Innovation and Clean Energy to drive the commercialization of new hydrogen technology



Clean Growth

MISSION 3: FOSTERING INNOVATION ACROSS OUR ECONOMY

Businesses, industry, and government are harnessing the power of innovation to add value to products and services in new and traditional industries.

In B.C., the high-tech sector is growing quickly. In 2019, more than 130,000 British Columbians were employed in high-tech earning \$12 billion in income – the highest ever recorded.

Through the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#), our government is fostering innovation across the economy by supporting talent development, tech adoption, scale-up of small businesses, and collaboration between the innovation ecosystem and other sectors of the economy.

This mission will position B.C. as a global innovation leader so that British Columbians benefit from new jobs and opportunities across an innovation-driven economy.

KEY ACTIONS

- Helping high-potential businesses grow in B.C. through InBC, a \$500-million strategic investment fund that will deliver economic, environmental and social returns.
- Creating the new B.C. Centre for Innovation and Clean Energy.
- Positioning B.C. to be a world leader on quantum computing by creating the Quantum Algorithms Institute at Simon Fraser University.
- Developing a Coastal Marine Strategy, Wild Salmon Strategy and Watershed Security Strategy.
- Creating 2,000 new tech-relevant spaces in public post-secondary institutions on top of the 2,900 new tech spaces already created.
- Working with government and business leaders from both sides of the border, through the Cascadia Innovation Corridor, to create a global model for sustainable growth.
- Investing in B.C.-based carbon capture and storage and other low carbon technologies.
- Developing a long-term provincial shipbuilding strategy to ensure continued growth and jobs.
- Developing an intellectual property strategy to support the growth and innovation of B.C. companies.





THE ROLE OF INNOVATION

Innovation is the process of generating and applying fresh ideas to develop new or improved products and services.

Driving the expansion of B.C.'s tech, clean energy and life sciences sectors, while adding value to traditional industries like mining and forestry, innovation is a key contributor to new jobs and growth throughout B.C.'s economy. Innovation improves our productivity, increases wages, boosts investments, and increases exports.

The [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) fosters B.C.'s innovation eco-system through a *Future Ready: Skills for the Jobs of Tomorrow plan* to

develop and attract new talent, the *CleanBC: Roadmap 2030* to counter climate change, and new social and physical infrastructure to strengthen communities and promote economic development across the province.

Through Innovate BC, our government is also providing support to businesses, entrepreneurs, and non-profits across B.C. to bring new products and ideas to market, adopt leading-edge technologies, and secure talent, while opening doors of economic opportunity for Indigenous Peoples and traditionally under-represented groups.

Clean Growth, New Actions

Mass Timber Action Plan

For generations, British Columbia's resource workers built this province, generating the wealth we all depend on for our standard of living and quality of life. Almost three quarters of B.C. exports are from our natural resource sector. Natural resources account for 50 percent of B.C.'s economic base – the money brought into our economy through exports. Natural resource industries are, and will continue to be, key to B.C.'s long-term economic success.

Already, B.C. is a world-leader in the development of mass timber, a new value added low carbon technology that promises to revolutionize the way we build here at home and in emerging markets around the world. Compared to milling logs for lumber, mass timber can deliver up to seven times the economic value for an in-demand forest product that helps us meet our climate goals.

The **Mass Timber Action Plan** seizes on this opportunity for future growth by partnering with First Nations and Indigenous communities to support new business opportunities, modernizing regulations, training the mass timber workforce, and profiling mass timber to markets in Canada and the world. B.C. has the highest number of mass timber buildings per capita of any province or state in North America.

ESG Centre of Excellence

In an increasingly competitive global economy, British Columbia's high standards for environmental protection, social support, and democratic governance are an important and growing economic advantage. Around the world, interest in responsible investment is booming as concerns about the climate emergency, corruption, cyber security, and systemic discrimination have grown.

To support B.C. businesses and entrepreneurs to promote, develop, and market environmentally friendly and socially responsible goods, resources and services, our government is coordinating the development of an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy.

As part of that strategy, we will establish an **ESG Centre of Excellence**.

The new Centre will facilitate ESG investments in B.C., attract socially and environmentally conscious investors, and diversify markets for B.C.'s world-class goods and services under a respected and trustworthy ESG brand.

Position B.C. as a worldwide hub for Life Sciences and Biomanufacturing

B.C. is home to the fastest growing life sciences sector in Canada with more than 2,000 companies employing approximately 17,000 British Columbians.



Through the pandemic, B.C.'s life sciences companies have earned international recognition for new technologies and treatments that are being used around the world. Virtually every COVID-19 vaccine candidate that reached late-stage development in 2020 used components that were consulted, initiated, developed, or manufactured by a B.C. company or scientist.

To support the growth and diversification of B.C.'s life sciences sector, the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) accelerates investments in health research. Through the ***Life Sciences and Biomanufacturing Strategy***, the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) positions B.C. as a worldwide life sciences hub by nurturing new talent, developing new lab space, leveraging the research capacities of B.C.'s post-secondary sector, and supporting employment across the sector.

A Growing and Innovative Ecosystem for B.C. Manufacturers

COVID-19 has shown us all that we need to secure, shorten and make our supply chains more resilient.

That means we have to manufacture more of what we and the world need here at home.

Manufacturing is already British Columbia's second-largest contributor to GDP for goods-producing industries in B.C.'s economy.

The scope of manufacturing in B.C. is vast, from wood and paper manufacturing to specialty aerospace parts. An estimated 11,000 small and medium-sized manufacturing companies contribute almost \$16 billion for B.C.'s GDP and employ more than 167,000 British Columbians.

Guided by an ***Industrial and Manufacturing Action Plan***, we will create more domestic manufacturing capability, increase cross-sector collaboration, and create new jobs and high-value, sustainable goods across sectors.



Clean Growth, New Actions *continued*

The Action Plan will focus on ways to:

- **Increase investments** in capital upgrades, R&D and advanced technologies to drive growth and promote supply-chain resiliency
- **Increase diversity and volume** for exports of value-added B.C. goods and new products through innovation
- **Accelerate and adopt green and net-zero initiatives**, and champion B.C. products as having an ESG advantage

Establish Integrated Marketplaces

British Columbia's small, domestic market can make it challenging for B.C. clean technology companies.

Without sufficient domestic demand, small companies can have difficulty growing to compete in the global market.

To help overcome this challenge, through the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#), our government will work with identified sectors to establish **Integrated Marketplaces**.

Integrated marketplaces help connect local clean tech companies with B.C. businesses looking for clean tech solutions.

Think of them as matchmakers.

B.C. businesses that share clean tech needs will join forces to buy a product from a B.C. clean tech company. In doing so, they give the local clean tech company the opportunity to fill large

orders which reduces costs, helps them grow, and opens up doors for export. In this way, integrated marketplaces support the growth of B.C.'s clean tech economy and will help us meet our climate change goals.

Getting our Goods To Market

Transportation and logistics make up a major economic sector in B.C.: over 14 percent of our economic base. And they also enable growth in other sectors, by helping businesses get the materials they need and get goods to market.

B.C. businesses export goods all over the world. And the StrongerBC plan positions our province to continue to move to the forefront of meeting a growing global demand for products that reduce emissions. Doing all of this requires a competitive transportation and logistics network here at home.

The [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) will develop a **Goods Movement Strategy**, to provide leadership and coordination among transportation industries and achieve greater coordination between roads, railways, and ports. The goal is to ensure inputs and final goods move as efficiently as possible and businesses are able to scale-up. The result will be economic growth throughout the province, including partnerships with Indigenous Peoples.

Projects like the Highway 99 Tunnel program and the Highway 1 - Kamloops to Alberta - Four Lane project are securing B.C.'s reputation as a global export leader.

Clean Growth, New Actions *continued*

Feeding B.C. and Beyond

When the pandemic disrupted supply chains, it made many of us pay attention to something we often take for granted — the food we eat. In B.C. we are lucky to have such incredible bounty right in our own backyard, and we help feed the world with it. Food is also a huge part of our provincial economy: our agriculture, seafood and processing sectors employ more than 64,000 British Columbians and contribute \$5.4 billion to B.C.'s GDP.

Food Hubs, already found in twelve communities around the province, help food entrepreneurs overcome barriers to growth by providing access to shared equipment.

British Columbia is also home to more than 150 innovative companies that are developing and using leading-edge technologies to enhance productivity, increase sustainability and improve food security. These companies are filled with workers who want to be farmers — just different types of farmers. The B.C. Food Security Task Force issued its final report to the government in 2020, highlighting key findings to remove barriers to help establish British Columbia as a leader in the next agricultural revolution. We now have an opportunity to position this vibrant and clean industry to provide socio-economic benefits while contributing significantly to GHG

reductions by using fewer resources all while feeding the province and beyond.

We are committed to making B.C. a global player in the agritech marketplace. A new **Agritech Centre of Excellence** will make B.C. a world-leader in creating an ecosystem that brings together government, industry, academia, and Indigenous partners to share innovation, best practices and knowledge all in the pursuit of enhanced food security and clean growth.

The Centre will help companies grow and scale-up including research and development, piloting, commercialization, incubation and mentorship and will help to create high-paying, high-quality, high-tech jobs in B.C. Our universities will demonstrate their world-class leadership and expertise by working directly with B.C. industry and companies and by sharing research and skills training. Through the centre, the province will also be positioned to capitalize on federal funding in support of agritech and agrifood.

Partnership opportunities with First Nations and Indigenous organizations, including direct training for more than 50 highly qualified personnel and piloting vertical indoor growing systems to grow traditional herbs, will be facilitated through the Agritech Centre of Excellence.





Helping Businesses Access New Global Markets

A distinct shift is underway in the world affected by geopolitical circumstances, the COVID-19 pandemic, and new international trade agreements. These events emphasize the increasing importance of a robust, resilient, and diversified trading base for British Columbia.

This is B.C.'s opportunity to form new relationships, explore markets in new geographic locations, and to identify fresh trading opportunities to help set the course for our future. The development of British Columbia's **Trade Diversification Strategy** will focus on promoting trade that pivots away from over-reliance on a single market, making B.C. more resilient to market volatility and

geographically specific trends and changes. This strategy will set the direction for increased opportunities to export our products and services, as well as for attracting foreign investment to support B.C. businesses.

We will continue to take full advantage of our competitive edge as a trade and investment jurisdiction renowned for our Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) values.

Opportunities to cultivate the participation of more diverse and under-represented groups in international trade will be a priority. One of the strengths of B.C.'s Trade Diversification Strategy will be our collaborative approach to exploring new opportunities by working with partners and stakeholders, in this province and across Canada.



TRACKING OUR PROGRESS

The [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) focuses on the direction of growth as well as the rate of growth. The plan will help generate a strong, expanding economy, while also ensuring the benefits are shared more equally, and that environmental sustainability is a foundation for future growth. In short, the plan starts from the assumption that, while economic growth is essential, such growth on its own is not enough.

To ensure that the plan's inclusive and clean growth goals produce tangible results for British Columbians, it includes tools that allow government to measure progress toward achieving those goals and adjust course as necessary. Such tools are important — not only to demonstrate a serious commitment to meaningful progress, but because we can't achieve what we can't measure.

We have to take a new approach to measuring economic progress.

The most common measurement of economic growth and prosperity is gross domestic product (GDP). GDP calculates the total output of an economy over a period of time. This

measurement has been criticized both for what it does not measure (it misses anything not bought or sold through the market) and for what it does (wars and environmental catastrophes both generate new spending, raising GDP).

Governments and policy makers around the world have come to the same conclusion about needing a new approach. They have developed their own measurements. **Because what gets measured gets done.** The United Nations tracks progress towards its Sustainable Development Goals using a broad range of social, environmental and economic metrics. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Better Life Initiative is based on 11 key indicators. New Zealand's national budgets now include indicators to measure "well-being."

The B.C. government will continue to measure and report on GDP and starting with this plan, will also consider a broader set of indicators. For more information on the indicators used to track B.C.'s economic progress, please visit: [StrongerBC.ca/plan](https://www25.gov.bc.ca/plan)

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GOOD LIVES IN STRONG COMMUNITIES
Investing in a bright future for rural communities





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Message from the Premier: Strong rural communities are the backbone of a stronger BC for everyone

Rural BC encompasses communities of all kinds – from places that can only be accessed by boat or floatplane, to larger regional hubs seeing remarkable growth. Like the diversity of rural communities, the people of rural BC themselves are diverse, unified by strength of character, unconditional support for neighbours, and appreciation for the natural beauty and bounty of our province.

Rural BC also has strong connections geographically, culturally and historically with First Nations governments and peoples. In smaller cities and on worksites across our province, Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members work side by side with mutual respect and an increasingly shared understanding of history. Relationships are changing now, in ways that are lifting all boats.

I saw the challenges and the gifts of rural life in our province when my family moved to Port McNeill in 2020 as a part of my wife Cailey's training to become a doctor. The closeness of the community, access to beautiful beaches and wild spaces, and the quiet – especially at night – made it easy to understand what draws people to, and keeps people in, smaller communities.

A city boy my whole life, I loved life in "McNeill," and so did my family. Rural British Columbians are among some of the luckiest people on Earth to live where they do.

Rural life isn't easy though; everyone knows that living in more rural areas makes some aspects of life that city folks take for granted more challenging. That's why it's important for our provincial

government to ensure key services are delivered – whenever we can – in a way that makes life easier, and more enjoyable, in smaller centres.

To date, we've responded to these needs by making it a priority to bring the province together in three important ways: **digitally**, by connecting every single community in the province to high-speed internet and expanding highway cell coverage; **physically**, by investing in the roads, ferries, highways, transit, and small-craft harbours people need to get where they are going; and **administratively**, by making it possible for government workers to work everywhere in the province to serve the people who live everywhere in this province.

People in rural communities rightly count on access to strong and responsive public services. Whether it's being able to find child care and a good school for their kids, accessing top-notch health and mental-health care, benefiting from skills-training opportunities, or any other public service – people in smaller communities in B.C. deserve high-quality services designed for their local realities.

That's why we are strengthening services for everyone – while recognizing the unique needs of people in rural communities and modifying programs to be able to deliver for people in different kinds of communities across the province.

The landscape and size of our province means delivering services in smaller and more remote communities isn't easy work – it's complicated and requires the support of multiple levels of government. Having an MLA from a rural

constituency in charge of the province's finances helps make that work easier, and also helps ensure we can't lose track of the basic principle that our province can't succeed economically unless our rural communities are thriving.

Finance Minister Katrine Conroy has spent her life in rural B.C. – she understands first-hand how healthy rural communities drive opportunity for people throughout B.C. She shares our government's vision of a province where people have the same ability to build a good life in Trail and Burns Lake as they do in Victoria and Burnaby.

In addition to the support of a rural finance minister, I have also appointed two parliamentary secretaries from rural B.C. to provide leadership in areas where action is most critical to rural communities: Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health Jennifer Rice, and Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development Roly Russell. They are working with our rural caucus to ensure every government program considers and responds to the unique needs of rural community members.

There is a bright future ahead for all British Columbians, and that future needs to deliver prosperity and opportunity, not just in big cities, but also across every corner of the province. The good news is that technology and the global market's demands in the face of climate change mean that realizing this vision even in the remotest parts of B.C. is more possible than ever before.

Today, strong digital connections can unlock new economic opportunities in even the smallest and most remote communities – while preserving the size and character of places people love. We will be able to ensure high-speed internet access for all British Columbians.

Today, a new vision of partnership on the land with Indigenous Peoples is opening the door to global investment that sees our revitalized and renewed traditional industries as key to the solution of

climate change: renewable wood products, critical metals and minerals, and sustainable agricultural and fishing and tourism practices can and do provide good family-supporting jobs that are sustainable and secure over the long term.

We will be able to ensure economic success, growth and prosperity across the province, for all British Columbians.

Today, the bright future we all want is not only attainable – it's critical to unlocking opportunity for everyone in B.C.

If you're looking for people to help cut through the noise and get a job done, my bet will always be on the people who call rural B.C. home. They're some of the toughest, most hard-working and resourceful people I know. I'm proud to have so many rural British Columbians on our government team.

If there's one thing I've learned over the past few years, it's this: our province is stronger together. Going it alone won't work.

That's the way it's always been in rural B.C., with a neighbour ready to lend a hand.

There's a lot of work ahead of us – but we have five million plus neighbours ready to pitch in, brought together with this shared government strategy to get the work done.

Together we will build a stronger rural B.C., and in doing so, build a stronger province for everyone.



David Eby
Premier

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DEB', written over a white background.

Introduction

Rural, remote and Interior communities have always contributed mightily to the economy and prosperity of B.C. We know that when these communities thrive, it benefits the whole province – and puts us all on the path to a brighter future. That’s why it’s critical to strengthen rural and small communities and support people working to build a good life here.

As we face the challenges before us – drought, wildfires, atmospheric rivers that wash away our biggest highways – we can take comfort in one certainty. We’re all in this together. And we’re not leaving anyone behind.

The diversity of rural, Interior, coastal and First Nations communities is one of their greatest strengths and sources of opportunity. However, this diversity means they have different needs. What works for Prince George won’t necessarily work in Bella Bella.

Government recognizes that people in rural, Interior, northern, coastal and First Nations communities love where they live and don’t necessarily want drastic change. Any path to a brighter future for rural and remote communities must be deeply rooted in respect for place. Not all communities want to grow bigger – but all communities want and deserve to thrive.

To thrive, rural communities need to be connected to the larger global economy. Families need to be able to access information, services and audiences from home. Goods and people need to be able to move quickly, easily and affordably from rural B.C. to the rest of the world. And they need a government that includes them and reflects the perspectives

and expertise of people living in rural and remote communities.

Our vision starts with three steps to connect rural B.C. to a stronger future:

- delivering high-speed internet to every community in B.C.;
- helping goods and people move; and
- bringing rural expertise and perspectives to government.

While most of the challenges facing people in rural and remote communities are shared by people in other parts of B.C., often there are factors that make issues more acute in rural areas.

For example, climate change is affecting people in every part of B.C. But when people in Vancouver see wildfire smoke, more often than not – people in rural communities see fire. Both are challenging and scary, but having to evacuate one’s home and community to escape a fast-moving fire upends people’s entire lives.

That’s why it’s critical to apply a rural lens to the larger challenges facing the province and to bring good jobs in the public service back to rural communities. Because while people in B.C. share the same needs, and face many of the same difficulties, rural, remote and Interior communities often face unique challenges that make one-size-fits-all solutions unworkable.

Our vision for stronger rural communities is backed by actions government is taking to respond to the everyday pressures facing people in every part of the province, including targeted investments in

rural communities to address these provincewide priorities:

- better access to health care for you and your family;
- affordable housing in the community you call home;
- strong public services you can count on;
- building safer communities; and
- a cleaner, more secure future.

The economies of rural B.C. are as diverse as the landscapes that surround them.

However, many communities, especially smaller communities, rely heavily on a single industry or employer, and this makes them vulnerable to boom-and-bust cycles that are hard on families.

B.C. has experienced one of the fastest and strongest recoveries in the country coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our GDP growth has been a leader among the largest provinces for years, and despite global economic challenges on the horizon, we're in a strong position to take on whatever comes next.

As a whole, our economy is performing well, but not all families and communities are feeling the benefits equally. That's why government is working closely with First Nations, businesses and communities to strengthen and diversify rural economies.

Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is a golden thread that runs throughout all of government's Actions and Investments in a bright future for rural, Interior, northern and coastal communities. Many of these Actions and Investments support the *Declaration Act Action Plan* – a cross-government action plan that guides our work to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in B.C.

Partnerships with First Nations and Indigenous organizations, showcasing Indigenous excellence in economic development, land-use management, housing and many other areas of the economy, have been critical to creating new economic opportunities in rural B.C. and will only be more important in the years to come.

Our investments in strong and diverse rural economies are concentrated in these areas:

- building a strong, skilled rural workforce;
- growing crops and the economy;
- revitalizing and renewing resource industries;
- developing world-class tourism experiences; and
- clean waters and abundant fisheries.

These actions reflect both the existing diversity of rural economies and also government's vision of a strong economic future for rural, Interior, coastal and First Nations communities. Diverse economies make a strong foundation for a secure future.

Together, the actions outlined in this document are a snapshot of the work government is doing to support rural, Interior, coastal and First Nations communities to build healthier, more diverse economies that are better connected to the rest of the province and the world. They are the foundation that underpins our vision of a bright future where people can build good lives in strong communities throughout B.C.

A stronger B.C. is one where people from every community can create a secure future. A province that's connected – where people from every region can access opportunity and pursue their dreams.

Because we're stronger together.



WHAT DOES “RURAL” MEAN IN B.C.?

The land we now call British Columbia covers over 944,000 square kilometres. It includes vast mountain ranges, 40,000 islands — including the biggest island on the west coast of the continent, winding fjords, desert hills, a vast Interior plateau, the Great Bear Rainforest, and countless other landscapes and special places.

B.C. covers a larger land area than France and Germany together. However, these two countries have a population of more than 150 million people combined, versus B.C. with a population of just over five million residents.

More than half of the people who live in B.C. live in Metro Vancouver, with an additional 10 per cent of the province's population living in the Lower Mainland nearby. While communities on lower Vancouver Island don't have an outsized population, they have strong links to Metro Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. With Victoria the seat of provincial government, these communities have historically had an outsized influence on shaping provincial policies.

Seventy-five per cent of the province is covered by mountains, leading to pockets of population spread across great distances of relative isolation. The vastness of the province, combined with its sparse and unevenly distributed population, leads to unique challenges for governance and service delivery that give a different shape to the word “rural” in B.C.

While communities such as Prince George, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Terrace, Williams Lake and Nelson don't fit the traditional definition of “rural” due to their size, population density and services, they have a shared identity of being on the periphery of the concentrated economic and political power of the southwestern corner of the province. For the purposes of this document, the word “rural” is used with this context.

These shared factors don't erase the massive differences between regional hub cities such as Kamloops and communities such as Klemtu, Mackenzie and Gitwinksihlkw. Small, remote and First Nations communities have unique factors that require the government to look through a rural lens and develop local approaches to program and service delivery.

Connecting rural BC to a stronger future

The path to a strong future for rural B.C. is paved with connections. Connections between people. Connections between communities. Connections between goods and markets. Connections to the global economy.

For too long, those connections were neglected. People many in rural and First Nations communities in B.C. were left out of opportunity and left to fend for themselves.

Over the past five years, government has been working hard to reverse that. We've made significant investments in roads, highways, ferries and transit to help goods and people get around. And we've made great strides toward our goal of connecting every community in B.C. with high-speed internet, improving cellphone service on provincial highways, and unlocking digital opportunity for everyone in B.C.

Finally, we're taking steps to better connect provincial policies to rural priorities by embracing distributed and remote work in the public service, so that people from rural and remote communities don't have to leave the places they love to contribute their knowledge, experience and rural lens to provincial policies and decisions.

Strengthening digital connections

In the 21st century, people need to be able to connect with services, audiences, businesses, markets and their government from home and in their communities – no matter where they live.

Increased digital connectivity is critical to opening up access to jobs, education, training and services for people in rural and remote communities.

In urban parts of B.C., access to high-speed internet services is largely taken for granted. Businesses know they can offer their customers a range of payment options, and they will work consistently. People know they can rely on connecting with services, education and opportunities online.

That's not the case in all rural communities right now, but we're on track to change that. Together with our federal partners, we are on an accelerated timeline to connect every community in the province to high-speed internet by 2027, giving every household in B.C. the opportunity to connect.

The economic benefits of connectivity for rural communities start at the construction phase and continue for decades beyond.

Two provincial studies – one looking at investments in northern connectivity and one examining the Kootenays – showed impressive returns to GDP for the local community and the province over the short-term as well as a 20-year period. They showed:

- just one dollar invested in new connectivity infrastructure in northern communities would generate seven times the return to GDP over 20 years; and
- in the Kootenays, a single dollar invested in connectivity infrastructure was estimated to generate \$14 in returns to GDP in the long term.

These estimates didn't include the full economic benefits of being able to access services, education and job opportunities, and the social and health benefits of enhanced connections with friends, family and audiences around the world.

Cellphone service is also critical for safety along highways. Access to cellphone service affects the safety of travelling on highways and changes how people live and do business. People in most parts of the province take it for granted that they can call 911 if they get in a collision and are injured or can call for help if their car needs repairs on the road, but that's just not possible on many stretches of B.C. highways today.

That's why improving cellular access on B.C. highways was a key element of 2020's StrongerBC recovery strategy and is something we are continuing to build on with an additional \$75 million to deliver connectivity to an additional 550 kilometres or more of B.C.'s rural highways by 2027.

Actions and Investments

- Delivering high-speed internet to every B.C. community by 2027 – a joint 50/50 federal-provincial commitment of \$830 million (\$415 million each).
- Expanding highway cellular services by a minimum of another 550 kilometres of highway by 2027 – a \$75 million investment.
- Budget 2023's investments in expanding cellphone service on highways builds on \$15 million invested as part of StrongerBC in 2020.
 - StrongerBC funding is delivering connectivity along 532 kilometres of highway and to 30 highway rest areas, ferry terminals and campgrounds, including 252 kilometres and two rest areas along the stretch of Highway 16 known as the Highway of Tears.

Helping goods and people move

Physical connections within and between communities are critical to the economic and social well-being of people in rural B.C.

Many rural communities are in areas with geography that makes getting around challenging. Long distances, narrow mountain passes, inland lakes and coastal waters all pose a challenge to moving goods and people. To support strong rural B.C. communities and economies, we are investing in transportation projects and programs that respond to these rural transportation realities.

Keeping ferries reliable and affordable, improving major highways, and repairing damage to critical infrastructure in the wake of natural disaster is an important part of making sure goods and people can move quickly and efficiently between communities.

The province has also been working hard to strengthen connections within communities by partnering with local governments to build active transportation infrastructure that makes it more pleasant for people to walk, roll and bike to and from the places where they live, work and play.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RURAL TRANSPORTATION

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges to the physical connections between communities. This was made particularly clear when an atmospheric river washed out roads and bridges throughout the Interior in 2021.

Highway 1 through the Fraser Canyon, the Coquihalla, the Hope-Princeton and Highway 99 were all closed for weeks. Highway 8 from Merritt to Spences Bridge was all but destroyed, with more than 25 sections totalling more than seven kilometres of highway lost into the Nicola River.

With the exception of Highway 8, all these roads were reopened by mid-January 2022. The permanent rebuild of these roads, including additional measures to make them stronger and more resilient to climate change, will continue throughout 2023. Highway 8 opened in the fall of 2022 and rebuilding Highway 8 will continue well beyond 2023.

Actions and Investments

- The province has committed \$1.48 billion over the next three years to restore highway infrastructure and make it more resilient to weather extremes.

KICKING HORSE CANYON

The Kicking Horse Canyon, located just east of Golden, is one of the most geographically challenging sections of the Trans-Canada Highway. This critical corridor carries more than 10,000 vehicles daily during the summer, including many tourists. It's a key economic corridor with up to 30 per cent of the traffic on this highway consisting of commercial vehicles moving millions of dollars in goods.

Recognizing the importance of this transportation connection, government has been working hard to bring all of Highway 1 from Kamloops to the Alberta border up to a modern four-lane standard, with work on Kicking Horse Canyon set to complete in winter 2023-24.

Actions and Investments

- \$728 million over the next three years for upgrading Highway 1 between Kamloops and the Alberta border as part of Budget 2023.

UPGRADING AND MAINTAINING FOREST SERVICE ROADS

Forest service roads provide vital connections to rural British Columbia's land-based activities, including providing year-round access to First Nations communities. These communities require safe access to Forest Service Roads not only get to their residences, but for ambulances, school buses and food delivery services. These roads provide important access to hunting, fishing and camping and are a critical part of the wilderness tourism transportation network in rural communities, while also serving as important industrial corridors.

In some cases, like we have seen with the recent closure of Highway 97 in the Okanagan Shuswap area, ministry roads such as the 201 Forest Service Road and the Trout Creek Forest Service Road can provide critical evacuation routes and supply corridors when provincial highways have been cut off.

To support rural communities government is working to upgrade the condition and improve the maintenance of Forest Service Roads across the province.

Actions and Investments

- Budget 2023 provides an additional \$11.8 million in operating funding and \$4.5 million in capital funding to maintain and upgrade forest service roads.
 - This is in addition to \$28 million in funding provided as part of the StrongerBC economic recovery plan.

BC BUS NORTH

The loss of Greyhound service was particularly challenging for northern communities. To meet the need for long-haul bus service on northern routes, in June 2018 government and BC Transit launched BC Bus North, a long-haul bus service connecting communities such as Prince Rupert, Prince George, Valemount, Fort Nelson and points in between.

Since 2021, this service has been expanded to include an enhanced Northern Community Shuttle program that services dozens of additional rural and remote communities, including Dawson Creek, Chetwynd and the District of Stewart.

Actions and Investments

- Created B.C. Bus North, and together with the federal government, provided \$7.9 million to the Northern Development Initiative Trust to sustain and enhance northern transportation links, including an improved Northern Community Shuttle Program.
- Provided an additional \$5 million to the Northern Development Initiative Trust to continue BC Bus North and the Northern Community Shuttle Program until 2026-27.
- Contributed \$250,000 to the Northern Development Initiative Trust to help build a web-based platform for travel planning, reservations and customer service to help reduce barriers to travel in the North.
- Provided \$2.5 million to the three regional economic trusts (Northern Development Initiative Trust, Economic Trust of the Southern Interior, and Island-Coastal Economic Trust).
 - The trusts will use the funding to conduct regional engagement and analysis on rural, regional and inter-city passenger transportation and for other initiatives in support of passenger transportation.
 - The results of the engagement and analysis will help inform the development of transportation solutions that meet the needs of people in rural, Interior and coastal communities.

FERRIES

For coastal communities and communities in the Interior that rely on ferries, they are no less important than provincial highways. That's why government is committed to keeping Interior ferries free and coastal fares affordable, and is working hard to upgrade the ships and other infrastructure needed to run our ferry system reliably and efficiently.

Actions and Investments

- \$500 million in new funding for BC Ferries to maintain the affordability of coastal ferries and prevent large fare increases over the next four years.
- \$85 million in improvements to Kootenay Lake Ferry service, including a new electric-ready vessel and safety and amenity improvements at the Kootenay Bay and Balfour terminals.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Families in communities big and small benefit from active transportation infrastructure that makes it safer and more comfortable for people to go for walks, ride their bikes or get around with their mobility device.

People in every community deserve to feel safe and comfortable to walk, roll or cycle to where they want to go. Investing in active transportation is investing in affordable, livable and healthy communities – and putting us on the track to a cleaner future.

Actions and Investments

- Over the next three years, a \$100-million Active Transportation Capital Fund will help communities enhance and improve connections within existing active transportation networks and develop new ones.
- The B.C. Active Transportation Grant Program has provided \$60.5 million since 2019 to expand active transportation infrastructure in 213 communities throughout British Columbia.

Returning rural expertise to government

Building stronger connections between rural B.C. and government is just as important as connecting rural B.C. to the rest of the province digitally and physically.

To do that, government is embracing remote work in the public service so that people can stay in the rural communities they love while also contributing their expertise and rural lens to government.

Over the past few decades, policy jobs in the public service have largely been located in major urban centres, forcing people to leave communities they love to work for the public service.

Starting in 2023, ministries were instructed to make job opportunities available in any community where the ministry has office space unless prevented by operational requirements, allowing people from more communities to work for government.

The public service is continuing to develop policies that will fully leverage the benefits of remote and hybrid work. As this modernization continues, it will allow more people to pursue a career in public service without leaving the rural, Interior, coastal and First Nations communities they love.

In 2027, when every part of B.C. has high-speed digital connectivity, it will be possible to be part of the public service from rural communities across the province. Not only will this bring good-paying jobs to rural communities, it will help policies better reflect the lived experiences of people from different parts of the province.

Actions and Investments

- Embracing remote work in the public service, recruiting rural expertise and bringing good government jobs back to rural communities.
- Strengthening the representation and inclusion of Indigenous employees in the BC Public Service through the Where We All Belong diversity and inclusion strategy.

Shared priorities for a Stronger BC

People in rural communities share the same needs and priorities as people in the Lower Mainland and Greater Victoria. They need access to strong public services, good, affordable housing and high-quality health care. They want to live in communities that feel safe for them and their families. And they want to see a path to a safe and sustainable future.

Better access to health care for you and your family

We recognize that many rural and remote communities have distinct health-care challenges, particularly around transportation and access to services close to home. That's why government is taking action and tackling these issues with a vision to ensure everyone can get the health care they deserve regardless of where they live.

Health systems throughout Canada and in B.C. are facing significant challenges from long-standing systemic issues and human resource shortages, along with the added burdens caused by two public health emergencies – the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating impacts of overdoses caused by toxic drugs.

People across B.C. need timely access to a primary-care provider for advice, diagnostics and preventative care. They need their prescriptions. They need swift access to health care in

emergencies. They need access to teams of skilled health-care workers who can meet their needs. If they are facing a life-threatening diagnosis such as cancer, they need to know they can get timely, effective and high-quality health-care services.

In 2017, when government began work in earnest to improve health care in regional communities, regional hospitals in smaller hub cities such as Terrace and Dawson Creek were more than 55 years old and long overdue for replacement.

A hospital is not just a building. Delaying these investments reduced access to modern medical settings, had left communities with fewer hospital beds, and made it harder to attract surgical and other critical medical talent to these communities.

Government is taking action to reverse the effects of more than a decade and a half of delayed investments and neglect that took place prior to 2017 that has left many rural, northern and Interior communities without the health-care access they deserve.

The scale and scope of the work needed to address the health-care service challenges facing our province while also continuing to navigate two health crises, and an increasing demand for health-care services from a growing and aging population, means that we have a lot more work to do to meet the health-care needs of everyone in B.C.

HELPING PEOPLE CONNECT TO MEDICAL SERVICES

The size and landscape of the province can make it challenging to deliver health care in rural communities. Some medical procedures, such as cancer treatments and complex surgeries, are best delivered by specialists at dedicated medical centres that provide specialized care.

Recognizing that it's not always possible to provide specialized medical care in every community, the province is working to improve medical travel assistance so people can get the care they need.

Actions and Investments

- Expand the support for people in rural and remote areas who need to travel for cancer care through an initial investment of \$20 million to enhance medical travel programs provided by the Canadian Cancer Society and Hope Air.
 - Through this investment, more people will be able to travel and get cancer treatment in one of the six BC Cancer Centres or at one of the 41 Community Oncology Network sites throughout the province by helping cover travel-related costs, including transportation (via ferry, air or ground), accommodation, meals and other relevant expenses during treatment.
- In April 2023, reservation fees were eliminated for people travelling via the Travel Assistance Program, making BC Ferries cost-free for people travelling to access medical services.
- Providing enhanced travel-assistance services while work is underway to stabilize and improve medical services on northern Vancouver Island.
 - In February 2023, two custom seven-seat wheelchair-enabled shuttles were purchased to allow new daily shuttle transportation between Port Hardy and Port McNeill for patients and staff and to establish a health-connector service to Campbell River and Comox.
 - A third wheelchair-accessible shuttle van was added in March 2023.
- Supporting cost-free flights to Kelowna for non-emergency medical services for people in East Kootenay communities in partnership with Angel Flight East Kootenay.

NEW AND UPGRADED RURAL HOSPITALS AND HEALTH FACILITIES

High-quality health-care facilities are critical for people in all regions of the province.

For more than a decade and a half before 2017, construction of new and upgraded health facilities stalled throughout much of the province despite many rural hospitals and health facilities dating back to the 1960s or earlier.

Since 2017, government has accelerated the construction of new, expanded and upgraded health-care facilities throughout the province to better support skilled medical professionals in delivering the best medical care to people in B.C. Building new and upgraded hospitals and health facilities in rural and remote communities will also improve working conditions for health-care workers.

Actions and Investments

- Building new, upgraded and expanded hospitals and health-care facilities in rural and other communities, including:
 - Trail, expanded Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital with new pharmacy and ambulatory care centre
 - Terrace, new Mills Memorial Hospital
 - Dawson Creek, new Dawson Creek and District Hospital
 - Fort St. James, new Stuart Lake Hospital
 - Quesnel, new emergency department and Intensive Care Unit at G.R. Baker Memorial Hospital
 - Williams Lake, upgraded Cariboo Memorial Hospital
 - Kamloops, new tower at Royal Inland Hospital and the construction of a new cancer centre
 - North Cowichan, new Cowichan District Hospital
 - Nanaimo, intensive-care unit replacement and new high-acuity unit expansion, and the construction of a new cancer centre
 - Port McNeill and Port Hardy hospitals, upgrades to maternity, emergency departments, trauma and nurses' stations, as well as bringing in mobile CT scanner
- Constructing a new state-of-the-art Seven Sisters mental-health facility in Terrace to offer enhanced mental-health services to people in northwestern B.C. as part of the Mills Memorial Hospital replacement project. This new mental-health facility is expected to be complete in late fall 2023.
 - The new hospital will also see an improvement in mental-health services, with 20 of the 78 beds dedicated to adult in-patient psychiatric care.
- Expanding access to same-day, urgent, non-emergency health care, and primary health-care teams with new urgent and primary care centres in rural and regional communities, including:
 - Nanaimo
 - Prince George
 - Quesnel
 - Ashcroft
 - Castlegar
 - Cranbrook
 - Kelowna
 - West Kelowna
 - Vernon
 - Penticton
 - Kamloops
- Building new long-term care homes in Campbell River, Nelson, Vernon, and two in Comox, with more to come soon, allowing seniors to get access to the health care they need as they age in their home communities.


EXPANDING THE ROLE OF PHARMACISTS

Community pharmacies play a crucial role in the health-care system, offering easy access to essential services. They are dependable and well-respected fixtures in communities of all sizes.

Recognizing this, government has expanded the role played by pharmacists in B.C. to better serve more people in more communities.

Actions and Investments

- Pharmacists throughout B.C. can now assess and prescribe treatments for 21 minor ailments and contraception at their local pharmacy.
- This includes more than 60 types of birth control.
- Community pharmacists in B.C. are now also able to renew and adjust prescriptions for many conditions.



“The rapid deployment of the First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day technology and partnership with groups like the Rural Coordination Centre of BC is an example of how technology can provide real solutions for our more vulnerable communities by delivering fast and effective primary health care where it is needed.”

– Richard Jock, chief executive officer,
First Nations Health Authority

RECRUITING, TRAINING AND RETAINING HEALTH WORKERS

Recruiting and retaining qualified health-care workers is a challenge facing every region of the province, and one that is affecting communities across Canada and around the world.

B.C.'s Health Human Resources Strategy contains 70 actions to address these challenges in every part of B.C. It lays out a plan to build a stronger health-care workforce and deliver better services for people and families.

Actions and Investments

- Hiring and keeping more skilled medical professionals in rural communities with prototype rural retention incentives for health-care workers in the Northern Health Authority.
 - These incentives are helping address acute health staffing challenges in the northeastern region, Hazelton, and Prince Rupert starting in 2021.
- This prototype program was used to develop similar incentives to recruit and retain skilled medical workers in Interior Health starting in 2022, and the North Island region of Island Health starting in 2023.
- Increasing seats in post-secondary institutions throughout the province, including;
 - 128 new annual seats at the University of British Columbia's (UBC) medical school, including in the Northern, Southern (Interior) and Island Medical Programs
 - 602 new nursing seats throughout the province
 - 20 new seats at UBC's midwifery program
- Making it easier for internationally educated health-care professionals to join B.C.'s health workforce by accelerating the recognition of their credentials and offering bursaries to help with the costs of becoming licensed so they can put their skills to work in local communities faster.
- Launching a second medical school at Simon Fraser University.

Nurses, midwives and B.C. ambulance paramedics and dispatchers have also reached three-year agreements to increase wages, benefits and working conditions that are critically important for the retention and recruitment of these health-care professionals for rural and remote communities.

BRINGING HEALTH CARE TO PEOPLE

As part of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, government worked with key health-care partners to rapidly develop and deploy a suite of new virtual primary-care services and supports to address urgent health-care needs, particularly in rural, remote and First Nations B.C. communities. This includes the Real Time Virtual Supports (RTVS) programs that offer services directly to people and provide specialist and peer support for local care providers as part of government's commitment to deliver high-quality health care to people in every part of B.C.

"With support from the province, we can improve the stability of our organization as well as increase our operating capacity, so more people in the East Kootenay area can access the health services they need with fewer obstacles."

– Brent Bidston, founder and vice-chair of Angel Flight East Kootenay

As part of this effort, government worked closely with the First Nations Health Authority, which collaborated with local First Nations communities to ensure that Indigenous people have access to quality, culturally safe virtual primary care.

Actions and Investments

- Offering people in rural, remote and First Nations communities expanded access to primary care through Real-Time Virtual Support, including access to doctors through 811.
 - Full-service family and emergency physicians are available daily from 9 a.m. until 11 p.m.
 - HealthLink BC's Virtual Physician Services includes physicians, pharmacists, virtual consult support staffing, medical leadership, evaluation and technology costs for HealthLink BC Emergency iDoctor-in-assistance.
- Virtual access to primary health care, mental-health care and substance-use care through the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA).
- Improving access to specialist knowledge throughout B.C. with Real-Time Virtual Support for care providers to address maternal and pediatric health questions as well as provide consultations and secondary opinions on generalist issues.
- Opening a Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic for people living in the most remote and underserved communities, those without a family physician or nurse practitioner and those in need of everyday health care.
- With the help of our partners, including FNHA and regional health authorities, taking action to address challenges in accessing health care by transforming access to primary care in rural and First Nations communities. For example:
 - Improving how we compensate doctors and nurse practitioners to recruit more primary-care providers and meet the needs of people throughout B.C.
 - Expanding the Health Connect Registry to better connect newly recruited primary-care providers to the people who need them starting in 2023.

Help to address mental health, substance use and brain injuries

Challenges arising from mental health, substance use and brain injuries are some of the most difficult challenges a person can face. These conditions can undermine a person's sense of who they are and what matters, and lead to challenging behaviours that friends, family and the broader community can struggle to understand and navigate.

When people are experiencing these challenges they need compassionate care, and they need it quickly. Unfortunately, between 2001 and 2017 little was done to build up the mental-health, substance-use and brain-injury supports that people need, especially in rural communities.

Since then, government has been hard at work building an integrated continuum of mental-health and addiction care that works for all British Columbians, no matter where they live in the province. It's going to take time to catch up after more than a decade and a half of inaction, but we're moving quickly to build up the infrastructure and local capacity needed to get people the help they need, close to home.

NEW PEER ASSISTED CARE TEAMS FOR RURAL AND INTERIOR COMMUNITIES

Responding to mental-health crisis situations with community-based care saves money, frees up police resources and keeps people out of emergency rooms and courtrooms.

That's why government is taking steps to expand Peer Assisted Care Teams throughout B.C., starting with an additional three teams in rural and Interior communities.

Peer Assisted Care Teams are made up of mental-health professionals and peer workers who work together to respond to calls related to feelings of hopelessness or despair, social isolation, loneliness, fear, anxiety, thoughts of self-harm and suicide, substance use or other mental-health challenges.

After seeing the success of the initial three teams, government committed to creating another seven community teams, starting with three new teams in rural and Interior communities.

It takes time to build local capacity and expertise to create these teams, but government is working hard to quickly expand this new service to more communities.

Actions and Investments

- Expanding Peer Assisted Care Teams into rural and Interior communities, starting with Prince George, Kamloops and the Comox Valley (serving Courtenay, Comox and Cumberland).
 - Another four community teams will be added as part of government's 2022 commitment to expand this program. The location of these teams is still under consideration.
 - Government is also funding the creation of an additional two specialized Indigenous-led peer response teams.
- From January until May 2023, the existing three Peer Assisted Care Teams received more than 700 calls, and the teams had to request police assistance due to a risk of safety or harm only three times.

EXPANDED ACCESS TO MENTAL-HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE-USE SUPPORTS

It's essential that people who need mental-health and substance-use supports can quickly find and stay connected to the care they need. That's why government is taking action to strengthen mental-health and substance-use supports for people throughout B.C.

Actions and Investments

- Improving access to substance-use treatment and recovery care with a \$586-million investment in Budget 2023. This will fund a number of actions, including:
 - 100 new publicly funded community adult substance-use treatment and recovery beds with no fees for British Columbians;
 - a new model of seamless care to support people through their entire recovery journey with 95 beds, with plans to expand this model to three more sites in B.C.;
 - expanding the Red Fish Healing Centre model of care across the province so more people have access to these services closer to home;
 - new after-care services at four new community recovery sites with dedicated workers to make sure people continue to receive the support they need when they leave a treatment facility;
 - investing in Indigenous-led services; and
 - increasing services for young people, including crisis supports, culturally safe wraparound services, enhanced transition services and improved emergency room hospital-based care and discharge planning.
- Providing access to low- and no-cost counselling services through grants to 49 community counselling agencies.

"We are hearing from the existing PACT communities that these teams have been a missing option for people in crisis. People and their loved ones have reported being relieved that they have an alternative to police to call in times of crisis. We know the impact is felt with every call and PACT's community-led approach to service has resulted in people being heard and connected, helping to ultimately transform how we approach situations of distress."

– Jonny Morris, CEO, CMHA BC

MORE SUPPORTS FOR PEOPLE WITH BRAIN INJURIES AND OTHER COMPLEX CARE NEEDS

Brain injuries can result from various causes, including overdose, trauma from accidents, falls, sports-related incidents, and violence. They can also occur due to non-traumatic causes such as strokes, brain tumours, infections and certain medical conditions.

Brain injuries are increasing in B.C., largely as a result of overdoses caused by poisoned illicit drugs.

Recognizing the need for action to address these rising needs and for supports to help people get along in the community when they have complex needs, government is increasing investments in community organizations that support people with brain injuries and opening complex-care housing.

Actions and Investments

- Creating new complex-care housing throughout B.C. for people who face overlapping mental-health and addiction challenges as well as other complex health issues, such as brain injuries.
 - This housing is already open or underway in 15 communities, including Terrace, Prince George, Sechelt, Bella Coola, Kamloops and Kelowna, and more help for more communities is on the way.
- Investing \$4.5 million in the Brain Injury Alliance to help B.C. patients coping with post-injury challenges, including those resulting from toxic-drug poisoning.
 - Alliance members provide services throughout the province, including in Campbell River, Courtenay, Duncan, Nanaimo, Powell River, Smithers, Terrace, Kitimat, the Nass Valley, Quesnel, Dawson Creek, Kamloops, Prince George, Osoyoos, Oliver, Keremeos, Princeton, Okanagan Falls, Penticton and Summerland.
 - These community associations run rehabilitative programs and offer services to people with brain injuries, including counselling, life-skills supports and homelessness prevention.

MENTAL-HEALTH AND ADDICTION SUPPORTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGHOUT B.C.

Young people deserve the best possible start in life. Wellness promotion, early intervention and prevention can often stop little problems from becoming bigger down the road.

For more than a decade and a half government failed to develop these services – especially in rural and Interior communities, leaving young people and their families struggling to get mental-health and substance-use care.

Starting in 2017, work began in earnest to turn the situation around, and government began creating Foundry Centres throughout the province, most of them in rural and Interior communities.

These centres provide young people between 12 and 24 access to free and confidential mental-health and substance-use supports, physical and sexual health care, peer support and social services, all in one location.

Actions and Investments

- There are currently 16 Foundry Centres open – nine of them in rural and Interior communities: Courtenay, Campbell River, Kelowna, Prince George, Penticton, Terrace, Williams Lake, Squamish and Port Hardy.
 - An additional seven new Foundry Centres are in development – five of them in rural and Interior communities: Burns Lake, Cranbrook, Fort St. John, Kamloops and Sunshine Coast.
- This is up from just one centre in the province, in Vancouver, at the beginning of 2017.
- 12 more Foundry Centres are being built with investments from Budget 2023.
 - The first of these new centres have been announced – one in Vernon and one in Powell River.
- At least 35 Foundry Centres will be open or under development provincially by 2025/26.

Affordable housing in the community you call home

Everyone in B.C. needs a place to call home. Whether you live in a big city or a remote coastal village, access to safe and suitable housing is the foundation of healthy families and strong communities. But in many parts of B.C., it has become tough for families to find an affordable, decent place to live.

That's why government is continuing to accelerate action to address housing challenges throughout B.C. and delivering new and innovative solutions designed to meet the needs of all sizes and kinds of communities, with the *Homes for People* action plan, released in spring 2023.

This plan continues the work government has been doing since 2017 to address a housing affordability crisis that has touched nearly every community in B.C.

Housing supply is an important part of housing affordability. To reflect this, new and enhanced investments and actions are on the way to speed up delivery of new homes and increase the supply of middle-income housing in communities throughout B.C.

With strong provincial leadership and solid partnerships with First Nations, municipalities, the federal government and community non-profit groups, we're on track to put more housing back in the hands of people, not speculators, unlock more homes faster, improve affordability, and help those with the greatest need.

Actions and Investments

- More than 76,000 homes in communities throughout B.C. have been added or are underway since 2017.
- With continued strong leadership from the province, 114,000 homes will be available for people throughout B.C. by 2027-28, including thousands of homes in rural, Interior and coastal communities.
- Providing grants to non-profit housing organizations throughout B.C. to buy residential rental buildings and co-ops, to protect tenants from eviction and prevent skyrocketing rental costs through a \$500-million Rental Protection Fund funded in Budget 2023.
- Funding the construction and operation of 6,000 new subsidized rental homes for families and seniors in need throughout B.C., through an expansion of the Community Housing Fund.
- This is in addition to approximately 9,000 new homes funded and built through this program since 2017.

Subsidized and supportive housing

- Since 2017, we've opened thousands of new subsidized homes in rural communities throughout B.C., including:
 - 145 subsidized homes in Nelson
 - 21 subsidized homes in Valemout
- Thousands more subsidized spaces are underway for rural communities, including:
 - 100 subsidized homes in Courtenay
 - 116 subsidized homes in Fort St. John

WORKING TOGETHER TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a significant issue affecting people and communities throughout B.C. and addressing it is a critical priority.

For more than a decade and a half, provincial investments in housing for people with the highest health and affordability challenges were too low and too slow to meet community demand.

During this period of inaction, communities outside of the Lower Mainland and the Capital Region received very little help building and operating housing for people with the highest affordability and support needs, leading to many communities seeing a spike in street homelessness and encampments as housing costs rose.

This includes communities such as Sechelt and Lower Post where new provincial investments in supportive housing had not been made in a decade or more.

We are working to improve access to a range of services and supports for those sheltering outdoors around the province, while helping communities manage encampments and other issues related to homelessness.

Homelessness is a complex problem that will require strong partnerships with First Nations, local governments and the federal government, as well as actions across government to address. Government is working not just to address homelessness when it happens but to prevent it through treating root causes such as untreated mental illnesses, problematic substance use, and lack of support and access to opportunities.

Actions and Investments

- Delivering new subsidized and supportive housing to more than 100 communities in rural B.C., including communities such as Dawson Creek that had never received provincial support to build and operate this kind of housing.
- Since 2017, we've opened thousands of new supportive homes in rural communities throughout B.C., including:
 - 179 spaces in supportive housing in Vernon
 - 32 spaces in supportive housing in Dawson Creek
- Thousands more spaces in supportive housing are on the way for rural communities, including:
 - 40 spaces in supportive housing in Cranbrook
 - 34 spaces in supportive housing Grand Forks
- Creating new Homeless Encampment Action Response Teams (HEART) to rapidly respond to encampments and better support people sheltering outdoors to move inside, throughout the province.
 - The program will bring together provincial and local governments, Indigenous and First Nations partners, Northern Health and non-profit organizations to quickly assess the needs of people sheltering in encampments and provide rapid access to the supports and services they need to exit homelessness.
 - Health, sanitation, income, harm reduction, fire safety, and social and cultural supports will all be provided through the program.
- Delivering new emergency housing, shelter options and immediate co-ordinated supports to assist people in encampments or sheltering in public space to come inside and access temporary or permanent housing options that fit their needs through new Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH).
- Providing enhanced supports, including housing supports, for youth leaving care and transitioning to adulthood.
- These and other actions to address homelessness are being supported through a \$1.4 billion investment in Budget 2023 as part of the *Homes for People* action plan.

HELPING HOMEOWNERS BUILD RENTAL HOMES THROUGHOUT B.C.

Multi-unit, purpose-built condominiums and rental buildings are not the right solution for every housing problem – particularly in small, rural and remote communities.

That's one reason why, beginning in early 2024, homeowners will be able to access a forgivable loan of up to 50% of the cost of renovations, and up to a maximum of \$40,000, to create new long-term rental housing on their property, for rental at below market rates.

Supporting and empowering homeowners in eligible municipalities to do their part to help ease the housing crisis by building new secondary suites and laneway homes is one way government is working to address the housing needs of people in all kinds and sizes of communities.

Actions and Investments

- Offering at least 3,000 homeowners a rebate for costs to build new homes for affordable, long-term rental on their properties.
 - This pilot program is part of Budget 2023's *Homes for People* plan.

WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TO BUILD HOUSING

Indigenous Peoples in B.C. face unique challenges when it comes to housing, whether they live in urban areas or in rural and remote communities, on reserve or off.

Systemic and pervasive racism against Indigenous Peoples remains a significant barrier to finding good housing for many Indigenous families.

In 2018, in recognition of the need for culturally safe, distinctions-based housing to meet these

challenges, the provincial government created the \$550-million Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund.

Key to this bold step toward a stronger future was a historic choice to make on-reserve housing eligible for funding from this and other provincial housing programs. Because on-reserve housing is a federal responsibility, provincial governments have excluded on-reserve projects from housing funding.

Together we're making progress, but as people in communities of all sizes continue to struggle with the cost and availability of housing, more needs to be done.

That's why we're doubling this program to build and operate a total of 3,500 homes for Indigenous people as part of Budget 2023's *Homes for People* plan.

Actions and Investments

- Working with First Nations and Indigenous partners to build and operate an additional 1,750 homes as part of Budget 2023's *Homes for People* plan.
 - These new homes will be in addition to the 1,750 new spaces in Indigenous housing that were committed in 2017, bringing the total to 3,500.

OPENING THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY WITH NEW STUDENT HOUSING

In the decade and a half before 2017, the provincial government built a total of just 130 student housing spaces at colleges, universities and technical institutes in B.C.

This decade and a half of inaction had a particularly profound effect on the availability of homes for students at smaller college and university campuses in rural B.C. that didn't have the mandate, capital

or financing to build the student housing needed to enable people from all parts of B.C. to access education and training.

Starting in 2017, renewed provincial leadership began the hard work of turning the student housing situation around.

As of 2023, more than 7,700 new student homes on post-secondary campuses in every region of B.C. were open or underway. This is creating much-needed homes for students and making space for other renters to find homes.

We've made tremendous progress, but there is still more to do. That's why government is building another 4,000 student homes over the next four years.

Actions and Investments

- New student housing is already open and helping people attend school in rural and Interior communities, including:
 - 533 spaces in Kamloops at Thompson Rivers University
 - 220 spaces in Kelowna at the University of British Columbia Okanagan
 - 100 spaces in Cranbrook at the College of the Rockies
 - 108 spaces in Terrace at Coast Mountain College
- More student housing in rural and Interior communities is already approved and under construction, including:
 - 100 spaces in Vernon at Okanagan College
 - 216 spaces in Kelowna at Okanagan College
 - 114 spaces in Castlegar at Selkirk College
 - 36 spaces in Nelson at Selkirk College
 - 217 spaces in the Comox Valley at North Island College
 - 266 spaces in Nanaimo at Vancouver Island University
 - An additional 148 spaces in Kamloops at Thompson River University
- Another 4,000 student homes will be built in areas of highest unmet demand, making it easier and more affordable for students to pursue education and training opportunities outside their home community.
 - These new student homes are being funded with a \$575-million investment through Budget 2023's *Homes for People* action plan.

HOUSING TO HELP PEOPLE LEAVE ABUSE BEHIND

Together with people from all walks of life and parts of society, government has been working hard to end intimate partner abuse and gender-based violence in B.C. Key to this work is providing people with safety and supports so women can leave abuse behind without putting themselves or their children at risk of becoming unhoused.

Since 2017, government has been delivering transition housing to communities throughout B.C., including communities such as Duncan and Kitimat, which had not received support to build and operate this kind of housing for more than a decade.

Actions and Investments

- Building 3,000 transition housing, second-stage housing and long-term housing spaces for women and children leaving violence throughout B.C.
 - Half of these spaces are being funded with a new \$1.2-billion investment through 2023's *Homes for People* plan.
- Since 2017, seven rural communities opened transition housing for the first time, including Invermere, Courtenay, MacKenzie, Penticton, Duncan, Campbell River and Prince George, with more to come, thanks to funding from the Women's Transition Housing Fund.

Strong public services you can count on

People in every part of the province rely on provincial services and programs to meet their needs. The geography of rural and remote areas has long made it challenging to deliver equal access to services in every part of B.C., however, as we move closer to fulfilling our commitment to deliver high-speed internet connectivity to every community in the province by 2027, it is opening up new and exciting opportunities for enhanced service delivery throughout B.C.

However, many services, such as child care, just can't be delivered virtually. To improve access, we're investing in the infrastructure and skilled workers needed to deliver high-quality public services throughout the province.

HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION IN GOOD RURAL SCHOOLS

Strong public schools are the heart and soul of communities. Without access to high-quality public education, communities can't thrive.

We're confident in the future of rural, Interior and coastal communities. That's why we're investing in that future by building new, expanded and upgraded schools throughout the province, including new schools in Quesnel, Kelowna and Trail, additions to schools in Fernie and Pouce Coupe, major seismic upgrades in Masset, Ucluelet and Nanaimo, and more.

School gyms are important not just for physical education and school events, but as places to gather, host celebrations, and participate in ceremonies and cultural activities. As part of our investments in strong rural communities, we're building the very first purpose-built school gyms in the communities of Upper Halfway and Gitwinksihlkw.

Actions and Investments

- Boosting funding for rural school districts in 2023-24 by another \$19 million through an increase to the Unique Geographic Factors supplement.
 - This supplement provided a total of \$360 million in additional funding for schools in rural and remote communities in 2023-24.
 - This funding has increased by 32% since 2016-17.
- Drastically reducing school closures – more than 200 schools were closed between 2001 and 2016, many of them in rural communities.
 - Over the past six years, just 12 schools have closed.
- Delivering new schools, additions and upgrades to support students in rural, remote and Interior communities, including:
 - Pouce Coupe: Two new classrooms at Pouce Coupe Elementary
 - Nanaimo: Seismic upgrades at Pleasant Valley Elementary and Cilaire Elementary, and a new stand-alone two-storey addition to Ecole Hammond Bay Elementary
 - Quesnel: A new Quesnel Junior School with space for 550 students
 - Trail: A new Glenmerry Elementary School with space for an additional 165 students. The new school will also include a neighbourhood learning centre and space for before- and after-school child care
 - Upper Halfway: A new, accessible gym with kitchen facilities at Upper Halfway School
 - Kelowna: Building a new secondary school in West Kelowna – George Pringle Secondary School, and building an addition to Dr. Knox Middle School
 - Kamloops: Expanding Valleyview Secondary, replacing Parkcrest Elementary, and building a new Pineview Valley Elementary school and learning centre
 - Armstrong: A new gym at Pleasant Valley Secondary
 - Gitwinksihlkw: A new gym at Gitwinksihlkw Elementary
 - Fernie: A new kindergarten addition to Isabella Dicken Elementary
 - Masset: Upgrading Gudangaay Tlaats'gaa Naay to reflect modern standards of seismic safety and tsunami preparedness

BUILDING PLAYGROUNDS THROUGHOUT B.C.

School playgrounds are the heart of active, family-friendly communities.

For too long, school districts relied on parents and students fundraising to buy new playground equipment in the absence of provincial support.

This led to a situation where only some neighbourhoods and communities had access to high-quality outdoor play spaces, while many were left out and left behind.

Starting in 2018, government created the Playgrounds Equipment Program and began work to upgrade and replace playgrounds throughout the province.

Actions and Investments

- In 2018, government created a \$5-million annual fund, the Playground Equipment Program, to replace or build new school playgrounds to relieve the fundraising burden on parents.
 - Since then, we've invested \$35 million in 256 new playgrounds. This program has benefited more than 63,000 B.C. students.

SUPPORTING ONLINE AND HOME-BASED LEARNING

Some families, especially those in remote communities, rely on online and home-based learning for their children.

To support families and improve equitable access to high-quality online schooling, the province launched a new Online Learning model for B.C. on July 1, 2023. This new model includes new Provincial Online Learning Schools, a Provincial Learning Management System, and the Online Learning BC website, which will make it easier for families to find and access online courses and programs.

Actions and Investments

- Improving access to high-quality online learning options for families in every part of the province through the Provincial Online Learning Schools.
 - Families can search for all online courses and programs on the new Online Learning BC website.

HALFWAY GYM

Students at Upper Halfway school are in kindergarten to Grade 10 and live in rural and First Nations communities outside of Fort St. John. The school was constructed without a gym when it was built in 1960.

Students currently have access to the Halfway Graham Community Hall for limited indoor play, but it is not wheelchair accessible, has

no washroom facilities and is located 300 metres from the school along a path that requires plowing in winter.

The new, accessible and inclusive gym, which is under construction with an investment of \$5.72 million from the province, will also include a kitchen facility so that it can host school activities as well as community events, celebrations and gatherings.

MAKING CHILD CARE A CORE SERVICE THROUGHOUT B.C.

Affordable, high-quality child care is critical to supporting families to work, upgrade their skills and pursue their dreams.

Every family deserves support in reaching their goals, which is why we're building a future where affordable, high-quality, inclusive child care is a core service that families in every part of the province can rely on.

Actions and Investments

- Reduced child care fees by as much as \$900 per month per child for families with eligible children at participating licensed child care centres in communities throughout B.C.
- Funded more than 32,500 new, high-quality child care spaces in B.C. since 2018, with 14,600 of them in rural communities.
- Increased wages for early childhood educators by \$4 per hour to make it easier for child care centres to recruit and retain these skilled workers.
- Creating 1,713 new spaces in early childhood education programs at post-secondary schools, more than doubling the number of seats since 2018.
- Delivered more than \$27 million to provide more than 14,100 bursaries to support almost 7,500 students in early childhood education programs.

PARTNERSHIP WITH SCHOOL DISTRICT 67, OKANAGAN SKAHA

Government is partnering with the Okanagan Skaha School District to deliver 320 new child care spaces at four schools as part of accelerating efforts to co-locate new child care centres on school grounds. This approach is helping us create more child care spaces, faster, while making life easier and more convenient for families.

The four new child care centres will have 80 spaces each. They will be located on school grounds at Wiltse, Parkway and Uplands elementary schools in Penticton, and Giant's Head Elementary in Summerland.

Funded with an investment of more than \$17 million in 2023, these four new child care centres are expected to be open and providing high-quality child care by 2025.



UPGRADING INFRASTRUCTURE IN GROWING COMMUNITIES

Infrastructure is key to public services – whether these services are delivered by the province or communities. Recognizing that it can be more difficult for smaller communities to raise the funds they need for critical infrastructure, government has been working closely with communities to move forward on their priorities.

To support this, local governments received a \$1-billion boost through one-time funding to

address the needs of their growing communities in 2023. These grants are flowed to municipalities and regional districts using a funding formula that reflects population size and growth.

The province has also been working with communities to build critical community infrastructure to support clean drinking water, treatment of wastewater and solid waste, and greenhouse gas reduction through the \$450 million Critical Infrastructure Fund.



Actions and Investments

- \$1 billion distributed to all 188 B.C. municipalities and regional districts to reflect their needs and priorities in 2023.
- Building critical community infrastructure to support clean drinking water, treatment of wastewater and solid waste, and greenhouse gas reduction through the \$450 million for critical community infrastructure. Projects supported by this fund include:
 - improving water quality in Radium Hot Springs by installing a sedimentation pond, and a new raw-water intake and screening chamber at the Forster Creek source, with a \$2.5-million investment from the fund;
 - decommissioning the Lind Creek Dam in Greenwood to restore fish habitat with \$900,000 from the fund;
 - upgrades to the watermain and storm drainage systems and replacement of a deteriorating sewage main in Rossland, while improving pedestrian and transportation infrastructure above, with \$1.3 million from the fund;
 - supporting a new wastewater treatment plant that will reduce marine pollution and enhance access to fishing and shellfish aquaculture development, with a \$20 million investment from the fund; and
 - upgrades to water infrastructure for people in Armstrong with \$14.5 million from the fund.
- New and expanded local services are being supported by a \$2.4-million investment from the Northern Healthy Communities Fund, which is supported by the B.C. government and administered by the Northern Development Initiative Trust. Example projects include:
 - a new Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre in Houston;
 - the expansion of the Clearview Landfill near Fort St. James;
 - a Chronic Pain Network that will provide patient education in self-management as part of a larger program for chronic pain intervention for people in northern communities;
 - an advertising and marketing campaign to attract workers and new business services to Kitimat;
 - a program co-ordinator in the village of Telkwa to support emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities; and
 - nine projects throughout Terrace to support community safety, land-use planning, increased housing and homelessness prevention.

ENCOURAGING SKILLED IMMIGRANTS TO CHOOSE RURAL, INTERIOR, AND COASTAL COMMUNITIES

As the only immigration program under provincial control, the BC Provincial Nominee Program enables the province to directly select qualified prospective immigrants and nominate them and their families for permanent residency.

Since 2019, we have worked in collaboration with communities with a population of 75,000 or less to attract international entrepreneurs to establish new businesses. To date, more than 50 international entrepreneurs are in various stages of establishing new businesses in these communities.

Building on this collaborative approach, the province is further connecting with regional representatives to help business owners throughout B.C. connect with highly skilled immigrants so they can get the talent they need to grow their businesses and local economies.

As of Nov. 16, 2022, candidates for the BC Provincial Nomination Program skills immigration stream who are offered a qualifying job outside of Metro Vancouver, who have worked at least one year outside of Metro Vancouver, or who have recently graduated from a post-secondary institution outside of Metro Vancouver, will receive higher priority and greater access to the program.

By working directly with communities to improve these programs, we're creating new pathways for international workers and graduates to contribute to our vision of a bright future, where people can pursue good lives in strong communities throughout B.C.

Building safer communities

Everyone deserves to feel safe in their community. That's why in November 2022, the province launched a new *Safer Communities Action Plan* with immediate steps that will strengthen enforcement to keep those who commit repeat violent offences off our streets, and strengthen services to build safe and healthy communities for everyone.

Actions and Investments

- Hiring another 256 RCMP officers to enhance enforcement and crime prevention capacity, particularly for rural, remote and First Nations communities, with a \$230-million investment in Budget 2023. This will help police focus on violent crimes and other pressing public safety issues.
- Upgrading 911 services in B.C. to bring them up to modern standards, which will allow people the choice to contact 911 through new options, such as real-time text.

ACTION ON REPEAT OFFENDERS

People in B.C. are compassionate. Most people in the province recognize that at their root, many criminal behaviours are related to complex social and health issues.

However, this compassion has limits and those limits have been breached by repeat offenders who repeatedly commit disruptive and violent crimes in communities big and small throughout B.C., draining local resources and leaving people feeling unsafe.

The rise of repeat offenders is linked to unintended impacts of federal law changes and subsequent Supreme Court decisions.

Government is committed to tackling the complex issue of repeat violent offending and we're backing that commitment with concrete action through actions in the *Safer Communities Action Plan*.

Actions and Investments

- Launching new repeat violent offender co-ordinated response teams, made up of police and dedicated prosecutors and probation officers in communities throughout B.C.
- Building public confidence in the prosecution system with new direction from the Attorney General to prosecutors to implement a clear and understandable approach to bail for repeat violent offenders within the existing federal law.

EXPANDING MOBILE INTEGRATED CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS

As many as 20 per cent of police interactions in B.C. involve someone experiencing a mental-health crisis. While police do their best to manage these calls on their own, they aren't trained mental-health professionals and they aren't always in the best position to respond to people in distress.

Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Teams are specialized units that team a police officer with a mental-health professional to respond to mental-health calls.

The health-care worker provides on-site emotional and mental-health assessments, crisis intervention and referrals to appropriate services in the community, while the police officer makes sure everyone is safe.

When people are in crisis because of mental-health or substance-use challenges, we want them met with care and compassion. These crisis response teams support people in distress and connect them to the services they need, while preventing

the criminalization of people for being in mental-health crisis.

Recognizing the importance of these teams in reducing stigma and improving the outcome of mental-health calls, government is expanding these teams to nine new communities, including another four in rural and Interior communities.

Actions and Investments

- Nine new Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Teams are being created in 2023, including teams in Penticton, Vernon, Prince Rupert and Squamish.
 - There were already 10 teams throughout B.C., including in Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, Fort St. John and Nanaimo
- This brings the total number of teams to 19 provincewide.

A cleaner, more secure future

MITIGATING, PREPARING FOR AND RESPONDING TO DISASTERS

The size, scale, scope and severity of natural and climate-driven hazards has increased markedly, not in a generation, not in a lifetime, but in the span of a career for many firefighters and other emergency responders in B.C.

People who live on the forest's doorstep have always recognized fire is a threat to be respected and reckoned with. But we have gone from a time when big fires were less frequent, and smoke was localized, to a new reality where smoke often blankets the province, atmospheric rivers wash away even the biggest highways, and months-long droughts threaten farms, fisheries and communities.

As the problems we face change, the ways we respond to these challenges need to change as well.

As part of that, starting in 2022, government began transforming the BC Wildfire Service from a largely seasonal organization into a year-round standing service that can take a more responsive and cohesive approach to mitigating and preparing for the threat of wildfires and other hazards. With fires

becoming larger, hotter and more unpredictable, it's critical to maintain a skilled and experienced workforce to do this difficult, heroic work.

This new approach will be further entrenched with new emergency-management legislation to be introduced in fall 2023. When it's introduced, it will be the first land-based legislation co-developed by First Nations and the provincial government.

Actions and Investments

- Protecting people and property in B.C. with new emergency-management legislation with an emphasis on reducing the risks facing communities.
 - The legislation will lay the foundation for a more comprehensive approach to emergency management, moving away from a response-based approach to one that encompasses all four phases of emergency management, including mitigation, preparedness and recovery.
 - For the first time, the act will require the consideration of climate change in emergency-management planning.
 - This is the first land-based legislation co-developed with First Nations in B.C.
- Transforming the BC Wildfire Service into a standing service that works year-round to prevent, mitigate and respond to wildfires.
 - A year-round service model will allow BC Wildfire Service to put more emphasis on all four pillars of emergency management: prevention and mitigation, preparedness, and response and recovery.
 - It will give us greater flexibility to deploy highly skilled BC Wildfire Service staff to assist with provincial natural hazard responses year round.
- Releasing a Water Scarcity Dashboard to help First Nations and local authorities with forecasting, modelling and real-time decision-making for water supply and demand concerns in response to the 2023 drought.
- Created a stand-alone ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness to bring resources and focus to this critical priority.

HELPING COMMUNITIES PREPARE FOR EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

Recent extreme weather events in B.C. have threatened people and damaged property, with most of the damage concentrated in rural, Interior and First Nations communities.

The rapidly increasing scale and frequency of climate-related disasters in B.C. makes it urgent for the province to work closely with local governments and First Nations to prepare for the risks of natural hazards and lessen the effects of extreme weather events before disasters happen.

To meet this need for urgency, in Budget 2023 government increased support for communities preparing for the risk of natural disasters related to climate change, and funded the creation of a new one-stop online platform to help people and communities better prepare for, mitigate and understand disaster and climate risks.

Actions and Investments

- Helping local governments and First Nations prepare for climate-related emergencies by funding projects to address hazards and mitigate the damage caused by extreme weather events through a further \$180-million investment in the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund.
 - The new contribution brings the total amount invested in this important fund to \$369 million since it was first established in 2017.
- Helped communities prepare for and prevent flood hazards with 24 flood-mitigation, risk and hazard assessment projects as part of a federal and provincial partnership through the National Disaster Mitigation Program.
- Created the ClimateReadyBC online platform to make it easier for First Nations, local governments, professionals and the public to understand, prepare for and reduce the risks associated with extreme heat, wildfires, floods, droughts and water scarcity, earthquakes and other hazards.



CREATING A NEW ENERGY ACTION FRAMEWORK

The province's work to address the climate crisis requires all sectors do their part to reduce emissions, including the oil and gas sector. A new provincial energy action framework will ensure oil and gas sector projects fit within B.C.'s climate commitments and create new opportunities for people in the emerging clean-energy industry.

Actions and Investments

- Under the new energy action framework, the province will:
 - require all proposed LNG facilities in or entering the environmental assessment (EA) process to pass an emissions test with a credible plan to be net zero by 2030;
 - put in place a regulatory emissions cap for the oil and gas industry to ensure B.C. meets its 2030 emissions-reduction target for the sector;
 - establish a clean-energy and major projects office to fast track investment in clean energy and technology and create good, sustainable jobs in the transition to a cleaner economy; and
 - create a BC Hydro task force to accelerate the electrification of B.C.'s economy by powering more homes, businesses and industries with renewable electricity.

PROTECTING 30 PER CENT OF THE PROVINCE BY 2030

B.C. has the greatest diversity of species, ecosystems and habitats of any province or territory in Canada, and has always been a conservation leader.

Parks, conservancies and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas are critical to protecting wild spaces and the ecosystems that rely on them today and for generations to come. They are also important for tourism, wild food harvesting and other economic, social and cultural activities in rural and remote communities.

There are currently approximately 18.5 million hectares of protected and conserved areas in B.C., making up 19.6 per cent of its total land area. We've committed to expand on this strong foundation for healthy wild places and thriving ecosystems by conserving and protecting 30 per cent of B.C.'s land and marine areas by 2030.

It will take strong partnerships with First Nations, the federal government and local communities to deliver on this target, but we're already well on our way. In 2022, the province began a comprehensive review of B.C.'s *Wildlife Act* to improve the conservation and management of wildlife and important habitats, while also recognizing the interests of rights and title holders.

This review, which considers factors such as improved and updated approaches to land-use planning, ecosystem health, biodiversity and species at risk, will inform further consultation and engagement with Indigenous Peoples, municipalities and the general public before changes to laws and regulations are made.

Actions and Investments

- Supporting healthy ecosystems, tourism businesses and diverse rural economies by conserving and protecting 30 per cent of B.C.'s land and marine areas by 2030.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO SWITCH TO CLEAN-ENERGY GENERATION

Diesel electricity is an unfortunate reality in many remote First Nations communities. It's expensive, it pollutes the air and it stops communities from reaching their climate goals.

As part of changing this, the province is providing remote First Nations with as much as \$2 million in support of clean-energy projects that can power their homes, economies and daily lives with an extension of the Community Energy Diesel Reduction program.

Actions and Investments

- Supporting more remote First Nations communities to replace diesel power generation with cleaner options, including hydro-electric, solar, biomass and wind by doubling of the length of the Community Energy Diesel Reduction Program from three to six years with an additional \$30-million investment from the province.

HELPING COMMUNITIES LOWER EMISSIONS AND DIVERT WASTE FROM LANDFILLS

When organic waste such as food scraps, lawn clippings and landscaping debris are dumped in landfills, they can become a major source of climate-changing methane emissions. Methane traps 25 times as much heat as carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, making it a high priority to address at the source as part of meeting our shared climate-change goals.

Recognizing that not all communities have the capacity or economies of scale to manage organic waste without senior government support, the province partnered with the federal government to create and fund the Organics Infrastructure Program to invest in new composting facilities. Due to the program's success, the province launched the Organics Infrastructure and Collection Program, which supports organic processing facilities and curbside collection projects.

Actions and Investments

- Working with communities to increase organic waste processing capacity, address methane pollution and keep organic waste out of landfills, with \$20 million in grants available through the Organics Infrastructure Program and almost \$25.9 million under the Organics Infrastructure and Collection Program.



FORT NELSON WORM COMPOSTING

In 2017, Wilf Hoath, owner of a Fort Nelson chain restaurant, started vermicomposting to reduce the amount of garbage his business generated. It was wildly successful, with the worms quickly turning all his business's cardboard, food scraps and other organic waste into valuable compost.

His success attracted the attention of the regional municipality, which was looking for ways to divert organic waste from the local landfill; they partnered with him on a pilot project to see if vermicomposting could help.

During the first round, the pilot transformed 70,000 kilograms of waste into fertilizer. After testing, this fertilizer was approved for agricultural and landscaping use, and the municipality began planning to make vermicomposting a permanent part of the region's approach to managing food, yard and paper waste.

To help make this vision a reality, the provincial and federal governments delivered a \$445,092 grant for a new, permanent worm-composting facility through the Organics Infrastructure Program.

Investing in strong and diverse rural economies

Diversified economies are strong economies. Relying too heavily on a single business or industry leaves people vulnerable to boom-and-bust cycles that harm families and displace and disrupt communities.

People shouldn't have to leave the home they love to pursue work, opportunity and a good life. But for too long, that's been a reality for many people born in rural, remote and Interior communities.

By delivering high-speed connections throughout the province, helping goods and people get around, and bringing back rural expertise to government, we are laying the foundation of stronger, more diverse economies throughout B.C.

Building a strong, skilled rural workforce

Over the next decade, it's expected there will be more than one million job openings in B.C. – many in rural communities. The majority of these jobs – over 80 per cent – will require workers to have some kind of post-secondary education and training.

We need to make sure people in rural communities have the skills they need to seize these opportunities and employers are able to find the skilled workers they need to grow their businesses and the economy. Skilled local workers are also critical to government's ability to deliver strong public services in every part of the province.

Through the *StrongerBC: Future Ready Action Plan* and other government initiatives, government is working to increase access to skills training and post-secondary opportunities for people in every part of the province.

EXPANDING TRAINING FOR IN-DEMAND JOBS

All regions of the province are experiencing shortages of workers with important skills needed to deliver public services and grow the economy. Recognizing that people who learn in rural communities stay in rural communities, government is working hard to expand opportunities to learn the skills for these critical jobs throughout the province.

Actions and Investments

- Ensure everyone has the opportunity to learn new skills and secure good-paying jobs that will support them and their communities with the *Future Ready Action Plan*, with a \$480-million investment over three years through Budget 2023. Initiatives include:
 - a new grant for short-term skills training to cover the cost of training for in-demand jobs;
 - new funding to assist small and medium-sized businesses in solving their labour-market challenges and preparing for a changing economy;
 - more opportunities for, and co-developed with, Indigenous Peoples, including funding to the new Guardian and Stewardship Training Initiative; and
 - creating thousands of new training seats for in-demand fields to help build up a workforce ready and able to meet the demands of the future.
- \$2 million to improve access to primary care paramedic training and emergency medical responder training, including improved access to paramedic training in Kelowna and Trail, and improved access to emergency medical responder training in Cranbrook, Port Alberni and Prince George.
- A \$3-million bursary fund for health-care assistants registered in Access to Practical Pursuing (APN) programs from Sept. 1, 2021, until May 31, 2024, at qualifying public post-secondary institutions, including Coast Mountain College, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and North Island College.
- \$15 million to support skills training for more than 1,700 Indigenous people throughout B.C. In the Interior, this includes programs such as a partnership between Lower Similkameen Indian Band and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology to deliver an Indigenous early childhood education diploma program.
- A new, free, accelerated program at Coast Mountain College is allowing aspiring early childhood educators (ECEs) to train closer to home at no cost while meeting community needs. Coast Mountain College is offering this program at its Kitimat campus from January until December 2023.
- \$3.5 million in 2023-24 for early childhood education programs that reach rural and remote learners through in-community, hybrid/blended and online delivery. This funding supports 281 student spaces in addition to base operating grant-funded program seats at 12 public post-secondary institutions.
- \$7.1 million for skills training toward Métis Nation British Columbia's (MNBC) Ministry of Skills Training, Employment, and Post-Secondary to support Métis learners.
- More than \$76.2 million to date has been invested in the Health Career Access Program (HCAP), which is an innovative employer-led training program launched in fall of 2020.
 - With funding available for as many as 3,000 participants annually, students in the Health Career Access Program receive a living wage stipend while completing tuition-free education.
 - Rural and remote partners have access to additional resources so participants can earn and learn in their communities, such as Port McNeill, Campbell River, Prince Rupert, Fort Nelson, Burns Lake and many more.

- \$42 million in ongoing annual funding to support 2,900 new student spaces in tech-related programs across the province, with a commitment to a further 3,000 spaces created over the next three years.
 - This includes new programs at institutions such as the College of New Caledonia, North Island College and Selkirk College.
- \$3.8 million in 2023-24 for 26 Adult Basic Education and English Language Learning Pathways at 12 public post-secondary institutions. These pathways support people obtaining the pre-requisites they need to access high-priority career programs, including in the areas of health care, early childhood education, skilled trades and technology.
 - Many of the pathways are helping learners in rural communities, including Hazelton, Fort Nelson, Lillooet and Hope.
- \$3.4 million annually for the Community Adult Literacy Program. In 2023-24, this funding will support delivery of 102 free adult, family and Indigenous literacy programs in 132 communities across the province.

IMPROVING EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

- \$44.8 million for Okanagan College to build a new Centre for Food, Wine and Tourism, which will include modern teaching spaces, food labs, beverage research and development facilities, and common spaces.
- \$3.4 million for Nicola Valley Training Institute for the purchase of three modern, innovative and fully equipped mobile training units to enable the delivery of leading-edge health-care training in rural and remote First Nations communities.
- \$1 million for renovations to transform the Greater Trail Community Centre into the newest campus of Selkirk College.

CO-DEVELOPING TRAINING FOR INDIGENOUS GUARDIANS

The place we call B.C. covers nearly 950,000 square kilometres – even more if one includes well-travelled maritime areas such as the 6,800-square-kilometre Strait of Georgia.

For millennia and to this day, First Nations have been stewards of the waters, land, wildlife and rich

resources of this vast area. They continue to be caretakers, first responders and knowledge keepers who manage and shape landscapes to encourage biodiversity, improve food abundance and enhance community safety.

“Guardians” is a term used to describe trained members of First Nations who undertake a wide variety of stewardship activities on the land base. Often called by different names (such as watchmen or rangers), guardians are employed by First Nations to serve as their “eyes and ears” or “boots on the ground” in their territories. Guardians are experts who help monitor and manage protected areas, restore animal and plant habitats, and contribute Indigenous knowledge to policy and project development.

In remote areas, Indigenous Guardians are also often first responders to both environmental and human emergencies on their territories.

Making watersheds and landscapes more resilient to climate change, assessing and addressing natural disasters, and restoring ecosystems throughout B.C. will require skilled workers in the most rural and

remote parts of the province. There is no one better suited to do this work than people who already know, love and live on the land.

A key goal of the StrongerBC Future Ready plan is to make post-secondary education and skills training more affordable and accessible in rural and remote communities. Working together with First Nations to develop a skilled workforce of Indigenous Guardians is key to that.

We're already seeing results of these investments from an earlier agreement with the Kitasoo Xai'xais and Nuxalk Nations. The first cohort of Guardians from these Nations were given their badges and recognized as full park rangers in July 2023, substantially increasing environmental law-enforcement capacity for more than 40 provincial parks and protected areas in their territories.



"This is groundbreaking; it's a historic day. It's a paradigm shift in how we work together with the province of B.C. These Guardians have passed all the required courses and completed all the required training, and recently graduated from the BC Park Ranger Boot Camp, and it's amazing to see this initiative come to life. This Park Ranger initiative will set a new path for our Guardians and we're able to come together today because of the people in the background on all levels helping to make it possible, making big moves to get to where we are today. If there's an example of reconciliation, this is it."

– Chief Doug Neasloss of the Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation

Actions and Investments

- Co-creating Indigenous Guardian training in partnership with First Nations to build up this skilled workforce and meet our shared goals of protecting, managing and restoring lands and waters in areas throughout B.C.
 - This training is being supported with as much as \$8.9 million over three years under the *Future Ready Skills for the Jobs of Tomorrow Plan*.
- The first cohort of Indigenous Guardians from Kitasoo Xai'xais and Nuxalk Nations received the badges and the legal powers and authority of full park rangers from BC Parks through the Guardian Shared Compliance and Enforcement Pilot Project in July 2023.
 - The Nuxalk and Kitasoo Xai'xais Nations have a long-standing Guardian program and have long worked collaboratively with BC Parks to manage more than 40 provincial parks and protected areas in their territories.
 - This landmark occasion formalizes the role Indigenous Guardians have long played in preventing, assessing and addressing poaching, polluting and other harmful activities on their territories.
 - The pilot, the first of its kind in Canada, resulted from an agreement between the Kitasoo Xai'xais and Nuxalk Nations and the province.

EXPANDING RURAL ACCESS TO WORK-TO-LEARN PROGRAMS

Education and skills-training opportunities that include work-to-learn components like co-ops, internships and practicums are more accessible and affordable for many. The ability to learn while earning a wage can make the difference for many families. And many learners thrive in a hands-on environment where they can develop confidence in their skills on the job.

In the past, these kinds of programs have been more limited in rural communities with smaller post-secondary institutions that don't have the resources to develop them.

As part of making post-secondary education and skills training more accessible throughout B.C., we are giving smaller post-secondary institutions the tools they need to strengthen and expand these work-to-learn options.

- Supporting post-secondary institutions, including Coast Mountain College, College of New Caledonia, College of the Rockies, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, North Island College, Northern Lights College, Selkirk College, and the University of Northern British Columbia to deliver more co-ops, internships, practicums and community-service-learning opportunities over four years with \$4.5 million from Budget 2023.

Growing crops and the economy

Agriculture industries are a major economic driver in many rural B.C. communities. Working with agricultural producers and manufacturers to boost production and add value to B.C.'s world-class agricultural products is a key way government is strengthening the economy in rural and small communities and supporting people to find good work and build a good life, wherever they live.

SUPPORTING FARMERS AND RANCHERS THROUGH CLIMATE CHANGE

It's arguable that no other industry is as sensitive to the impacts of climate change as agriculture. Farmers and ranchers rely on steady and predictable weather patterns and seasons to maximize production and profits.

Droughts, fires, floods, quick swings in temperature and other unusual weather can all disrupt food production and undermine the viability of agricultural industries. The long, harsh drought B.C. suffered throughout the summer of 2023 serves as a sharp reminder of this reality.

To address drought and other climate threats to agricultural production, government is providing supports to farmers and ranchers to upgrade infrastructure and improve practices to become more resilient in the face of a changing climate, while also supporting producers in the immediate term through challenging conditions.

Actions and Investments

- Supporting water users in drought-prone and water-scarce areas to adopt leading-edge water-management technology and use water more efficiently for agricultural uses such as irrigation and livestock watering through a \$20-million Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program.
 - The new program, created in 2023, is open to B.C. farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers, as well as First Nations communities, Indigenous producers, irrigation and improvement districts, local governments, and agricultural and conservation groups.
- Working with the federal government to help agricultural producers proactively mitigate the impacts of climate change with \$4 million in funding for the Beneficial Management Practices program.
- Introduced new Extreme Weather Preparedness for Agriculture program with \$1.4 million in 2022 and as much as \$2.5 million in 2023 to build a more resilient and sustainable agriculture sector by helping prepare for future climate events.

SUPPORTING FARMERS AND RANCHERS THROUGH THE 2023 DROUGHT

Government is working with farmers and ranchers on long-term solutions to new and intensifying problems caused by climate change, while also recognizing the need for swift supports in the face of immediate challenges, such as the long drought of 2023.

Government is supporting farmers and ranchers and working with the agricultural community, as well as the federal government, to support B.C. producers. New programs are being created to help farmers find more hay and feed for their animals.

Actions and Investments

- Offering targeted advance payments for cattle producers to address immediate cash-flow challenges, feed shortages and more expensive feed prices due to the 2023 drought, in partnership with the federal government under Agristability 2023.
- Working in partnership with the B.C. Cattlemen's Association to deliver a new Access to Feed program that is helping farmers and ranchers affected by drought conditions in the summer of 2023 to find feed for their livestock.
 - The province also approved changes to crop insurance to allow producers to write off grain and oilseed crops that were converted into livestock feed in response to drought conditions.

BUYBC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

BuyBC is a long-standing and successful B.C. government marketing initiative that was developed decades ago to create awareness and visibility for B.C. food producers, help increase sales of local food and beverage products, and strengthen the province's food economy.

Unfortunately, despite a long track record of delivering results and strong support from industry, government abandoned this affordable and effective branding initiative for more than a decade, until it was relaunched under new provincial leadership in 2017.

Since the relaunch, hundreds of B.C. businesses have benefited from enhanced visibility, new partnerships with retailers and improved sales for thousands of products.

Actions and Investments

- Since the relaunch of BuyBC, more than 800 B.C. businesses have registered to use the Buy BC logo to promote approximately 3,900 B.C. food and beverage products.

FOOD PROCESSING GROWTH FUND

When companies add value to agricultural products through processing, it supports more jobs and economic activity, strengthening agricultural communities.

Recognizing this, government is taking action to help B.C. food- and beverage-processing businesses increase productivity and competitiveness through a new Food Processing Growth Fund.

Actions and Investments

- Established businesses will be able to access grants of between \$50,000 and \$1 million for upgrades, such as new or expanded production and storage facilities, the use of robotics and other technology, new product development and commercialization, and other areas through the new \$20-million Food Processing Growth Fund.
 - Development of a \$2-million Small Processor Scale-up program to support smaller and less-established food processors and abattoirs.



ENCOURAGING AGRITECH

The B.C. agritech sector is a network of investors, researchers and businesses – advancing opportunity by advancing and adopting technology solutions that respond to challenges such as climate change and food security – issues faced worldwide.

British Columbia is home to more than 150 agritech companies, with the largest companies employing more than 100 people. Most of these companies are still located in the Lower Mainland region, but encouraging the expansion of this important sector into rural and Interior communities is a key opportunity to drive economic growth in these regions. Successful companies such as TechBrew, based in Salmon Arm, are leading the way in showing the possibilities for agritech to drive opportunity in communities of all sizes.

Actions and Investments

- Created the B.C. Centre for Agritech Innovation to position the province as a world leader in agricultural technology and encourage the growth of this key sector in 2022.
 - The centre is bringing together academia, government and industry partners to create more productive, diverse and resilient food systems.
 - The centre is focusing on developing, testing and piloting solutions to the agricultural problems people are facing today in simulated and real-world environments to be farm-ready for commercialization.
 - It is being funded by as much as \$6.5 million over three years from the province while the federal government is providing as much as \$10 million over five years through Pacific Economic Development Canada.





TECHBREW

Finding ways to automate repetitive, labour-intensive, delicate and time-critical activities so they can be completed faster and more accurately is a key opportunity to improve agricultural yields while lowering costs, and TechBrew, in Salmon Arm, is at the forefront of solutions.

The company has been working on robots that can automatically harvest fresh mushrooms when they are ready, helping prevent the spread of pathogens and reduce labour costs while delivering a high-quality product.

The B.C. Agritech Grant is helping the company evolve their automated mushroom-picking technology so it's ready for a larger portion of the market in Europe.

FOOD SECURITY

Access to high-quality, healthy food is critical for families. As food costs rise worldwide because of supply chain issues, global inflation and climate disasters, improving food security is important, especially for people living in small, remote and First Nations communities, where food costs are already highest.

Actions and Investments

- Working to improve access to affordable food, particularly in small, remote and First Nations communities through the new \$20-million Food Affordability and Innovation Fund with investments in projects to strengthen supply chains, connect producers to people and prevent food waste with improvements to food-storage facilities and transportation links.
- Starting the Feed B.C. partnership program to connect hospitals, care homes, schools and other government facilities to local food producers, multiplying community benefits and making critical services less vulnerable to supply-chain disruptions and wild price fluctuations due to world market conditions.
- Working with First Nations communities to use traditional foods to address rising food costs, mitigate climate change and unlock local opportunities in the agriculture and food economy.
 - B.C. is investing \$30 million in building and strengthening distinct Indigenous food systems, including the revitalization of traditional production, harvest and preservation practices.
- Promoting food security while helping hazelnut, grape, berry and tree-fruit producers become more competitive, resilient and environmentally sustainable with a new \$15-million Perennial Crop Renewal Program. This cost-shared program has three streams:
 - Sector-development projects – 100 per cent of costs for perennial food crop industry associations/sector stakeholder groups
 - Removal projects – a flat per-acre rate that is expected to cover 100 per cent of costs for perennial food crop producers farming in B.C.
 - Planting projects – 75 per cent of nursery plant and crop support system costs for perennial food crop producers farming in B.C.

UNLOCKING NEW OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE LEGAL CANNABIS INDUSTRY

Craft breweries, wineries, distilleries and cannabis producers are part of the tourism industry and contribute to the economy of rural and Interior communities.

Breweries, wineries and distilleries, and cannabis producers contributed \$3.1 billion to B.C.'s GDP in 2022. Over past five years, the three industries have contributed an average of \$2.8 billion each year.

Over time, changes to liquor laws have allowed small breweries and wineries to thrive throughout B.C., in part through policies that help them diversify their revenue streams and reach customers directly.

Work is continuing to grow a strong legal craft cannabis industry in B.C. with targeted changes in policy to support participation of small craft producers and ongoing work to identify opportunities to strengthen this burgeoning industry.

Building a strong craft cannabis industry is key to moving customers into the legal market, eliminating the illicit market, and creating economic opportunities throughout B.C.

Actions and Investments

- Launching the B.C. Indigenous Cannabis Product program to highlight cannabis products from B.C.-based Indigenous producers.
- Enabling farm-to-gate sales of cannabis products by launching the Producer Retail Store licence in November 2022.
- Making targeted policy changes to better reflect the needs of craft producers, such as temporarily amending supplier payment terms to support cash flow, permanently eliminating recall and product contamination insurance to lower operational costs and allowing small-scale producers to deliver directly to licensed cannabis retailers across the province.
- Working to identify further opportunities to strengthen the craft cannabis industry in line with policies that enable hospitality and agri-tourism experiences, allowing cannabis cultivators new ways to engage customers and build more diverse and resilient revenue streams.



CHRISTINA LAKE CANNABIS

Christina Lake Cannabis is the biggest employer in Christina Lake, a community of nearly 1,100 people in the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary. The company produces pesticide-free, outdoor-grown cannabis on a 13-hectare property.

Revitalizing and renewing resource industries

Resource industries have long been an important part of the economy of rural, Interior and coastal communities, and in a world looking for sustainably produced resources, these industries will long continue to anchor local economies in B.C.

There is an exciting story to tell about resource industries in B.C. A story of people coming together to change the way things have always been. A story of governments, businesses and communities doing things differently. A story of moving together with First Nations to advance development where it is welcome, and working hand-in-hand to protect the watersheds and landscapes people cherish and communities need.

When the B.C. Legislative Assembly unanimously passed the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, it put the province on the path to new opportunities built on respectful relationships and opportunities that reflect the needs and aspirations of First Nations and benefit people in the communities closest to resource development.

Resource industries in B.C. have an important role to play in producing the critical resources the world needs, including the resources we need to address, adapt to and mitigate climate change.

As we move toward a brighter future for rural, remote and Interior and First Nations communities, it's critical to revitalize and renew resource industries to be responsive, competitive and reflective of the realities we face today.

That means finding ways to make resources work harder for communities by unlocking innovation and adding value through products such as manufactured wood. And by making sure First Nations and people in nearby communities get a fair share of the benefits generated by natural-resource development close to home.

Investments in infrastructure such as high-speed connectivity, good highways and workforce housing are key to revitalizing and renewing traditional industries. So is working to improve permitting and other government processes to help good projects move forward faster.

Actions and Investments

- Improving the clarity and speed of natural-resource permitting to help reduce backlogs, increase certainty, move good projects forward and support further electrification and connectivity in rural, remote and First Nations communities.
 - This initiative, and wider work to modernize the permitting system, is being advanced through a \$77-million investment in Budget 2023.



SUSTAINABLE MINING FOR A CLEAN AND SECURE FUTURE

British Columbia is a leading mining jurisdiction and is working to provide the critical minerals the world needs to build a low-carbon future.

B.C.'s mining sector is an essential part of this change as we provide the critical minerals and metals needed to fight climate change. We are the country's largest producer of copper and only producer of molybdenum. These and other critical minerals are key to manufacturing the electric vehicles and renewable energy infrastructure we need to create a cleaner, healthier future.

Actions and Investments

- Developing a Critical Minerals Strategy to develop and leverage opportunities to mine the minerals needed to build electric vehicles, wind turbines, solar power and a cleaner future for everyone.
 - This strategy is being supported with \$6 million through Budget 2023.
- Working in collaboration with South Korea to support mining innovation, promote trade and drive investment in B.C.'s mining sector.

ARTEMIS GOLD'S BLACKWATER MINE

Developed in partnership between Artemis Gold, the Lhoosk'uz Dené Nation, Ulkatcho First Nation and Carrier Sekani First Nations, with the participation of communities in the area, the Blackwater Mine is a role model in a thriving, future-focused mining sector. It received its operating permit in just 10 months after final application acceptance.

The mine site is located within the territories of Lhoosk'uz Dené Nation and Ulkatcho First Nation. They have been engaged in all aspects of the

project, from exploration, to permitting, to environmental assessment. The mine's owners and both First Nations have a project participation agreement in place, and through an agreement with the province, Lhoosk'uz Dené and Ulkatcho First Nations also share in mineral tax revenue from the project.

Connection to the BC Hydro grid will provide the mine with a sustainable source of low-carbon hydroelectricity and the potential to produce gold and silver with some of the lowest greenhouse gas emissions in the world.

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR FORESTRY

The forest industry in B.C. is in the midst of a difficult transition. The timber supply has shrunk, especially in the Interior, primarily due to mountain pine beetle infestation, but also due to unprecedented forest fires, inadequate land-use planning and stalled replanting efforts by previous governments, unfair softwood lumber tariffs at the border, and the unchecked export of raw logs.

There is also growing recognition that timber harvesting has to co-exist with businesses that depend on thriving forests, such as ecotourism and non-timber harvesting, as well as important values such as protecting watersheds and ecosystems for generations to come.

Another important factor that is driving change in this industry is our shared recognition that First Nations' rights to manage and benefit from the resources in their territories must be respected.

There is a brighter future for forestry on the horizon, but it doesn't involve going back to the failed policies of the past. Working together with First Nations, industry and communities, we can create new opportunities to manufacture cutting-

edge products that can be supported with a sustainable harvest.

The BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund is one of the tools we've put in place to put us on the path to that future. This \$180-million fund is already on track to create new jobs and new opportunities in Williams Lake, where Massive Canada is building a new mass-timber production plant with support from the province.

We're also investing in the future of forestry by researching and developing innovative practices to strengthen forest resiliency, ecosystem health and climate adaptation, while continuing work to replant and restore forest lands throughout B.C.

Recognizing that it will take time to transition the forest industry to stability and sustainability, government is taking care of people today with forest worker supports that are helping people retrain, retire early and find new opportunities.

However, government's priority is to keep people working in the industry and to do that, we collaborate with companies to innovate and create new and sustainable opportunities.

Actions and Investments

- Helping create more than 70 long-term family-supporting jobs in Williams Lake with a \$10-million investment in Massive Canada's new mass-timber-based modular-housing production facility.
 - This investment was made possible by the BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund, which was doubled to \$180 million in Budget 2023.
 - The BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund supports established for-profit organizations to plan and launch high-value industrial and manufacturing projects that deliver direct benefits and stable, family-supporting jobs.
 - The fund is designed to help industries become more sustainable and create more value for communities by reorienting around producing higher value products such as mass timber and other advanced bio-products.

- The province is proposing a provincewide adoption of mass-timber requirements in new building construction to help accelerate the implementation of mass-timber projects.
- \$50 million for the Forest Enhancement Society of BC to prevent and mitigate wildfire impacts to communities while getting fire damaged wood to pulp and paper mills where it can provide benefits to people, communities and the economy.
- Working to turn forest waste into bio-economy jobs by introducing a Coastal Fibre Recovery Zone with stricter waste benchmarks and penalties.
- Researching and developing innovative practices to strengthen forest resiliency, ecosystem health and climate adaptation, including selective harvesting approaches and habitat restoration, with a \$10-million investment in the Silviculture Innovation Fund as part of Budget 2023.
- Planted well over one billion trees between 2018 and 2021.
 - Healthy forests and sustainable forestry are critical in the global fight against climate change.
 - B.C. is leading the country in its science-based reforestation efforts and has planted more than 1.6 billion trees since 2017, including wildfire recovery work where, in 2023 alone, we are planting more than 40 million trees in areas affected by recent wildfires.
- Supporting forest workers affected by changing industry conditions.
 - Government is delivering a suite of supports for people affected by weakening markets and changes in the forest sector.
 - This includes skills training, short-term employment opportunities and employment assistance, and retirement transition support for workers who are 55 or older.
 - It also includes our \$33-million Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program (REDIP) fund, which is supporting projects that promote economic diversification, resilience, clean-growth opportunities and infrastructure development. More than 200 projects were approved for funding from REDIP's first intake that will make a positive impact for people and communities.
- Working toward greater certainty of where sustainable harvesting can occur while continuing to protect other values through new Forest Landscape Planning Tables.
 - These tables are bringing together First Nations, scientists and forestry experts to identify wider forest values and threats to forest health.
 - The province accelerated this work with \$21 million in Budget 2023 to establish more Forest Landscape Planning Tables throughout the province.

Developing world-class tourism experiences

Tourism is a critical part of the economy of rural B.C. People come from all over the world for incredible wilderness experiences, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing and cultural activities that can only be found in rural and remote parts of the province.

The past three years have been incredibly difficult for people throughout the tourism industry. In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all domestic and international travel was put on hold, leaving workers and business owners struggling to make a living. And now, with rising costs from global inflation stretching family budgets, many people locally are reducing the amount they spend on local trips and other activities that keep tourism businesses going, especially during the off seasons.

Together, these factors mean many tourism businesses are still working to get back to where they were in 2019. Recognizing this, the province is continuing to take action to bolster and develop world-class tourism experiences in rural communities and throughout the province.

Actions and Investments

- Over the past three years, the B.C. government has supported the tourism sector with more than \$500 million in tourism support, including:
 - More than \$300 million to support tourism business recovery.
 - \$154 million in community-based tourism infrastructure for recovery to create jobs and spur economic development.
 - More than \$17 million to support Indigenous tourism in B.C., one of the fastest-growing sectors of the industry.
 - \$36.8 million to more than 80 major anchor attractions and tour bus operators.
 - \$30 million in 2021 to support 682 fairs, festivals and events in 134 communities throughout B.C., and another \$30 million in February 2023 to support 1,172 events in 184 communities.
 - \$4.75 million for fixed costs to help large accommodation providers, and tenure and park permit holders.
- Preserving and enhancing outdoor recreational opportunities in BC Parks and outdoor recreation sites and trails with \$101 million in operating and capital funding over the Budget 2023 fiscal plan.



SUPPORT FOR FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

Events, fairs and festivals bring people together, support a vibrant and thriving tourism industry, and provide important opportunities to build and strengthen community, especially in rural regions of the province.

Since 2020, many of these important community events have struggled to find their footing again. Loss of staffing and volunteers because of the break in operations, global inflation, supply-chain issues, and audiences that are not fully returning to indoor events, are making it more challenging than ever to continue hosting fairs, festivals and other community activities.

Recognizing this, government is providing grants to cover as much as 20 per cent of the cost of these important events, up to a maximum of \$250,000 per event.

Actions and Investments

- Providing as much as \$250,000 per event for eligible arts, culture and sporting activities, community celebrations, fall fairs and rodeos through the B.C. Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund.
 - 1,845 events received support from the B.C. Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund between 2021 and 2023 as a result of the province's investment:
 - 908 arts and cultural events;
 - 540 sport events;
 - 308 community celebrations and gatherings;
 - 90 agricultural fairs, exhibitions and rodeos; and
 - eight other types of events.

THE FALKLAND STAMPEDE

In March 1919, that first spring after the end of First World War, the people of Falkland, B.C., gathered in a celebration that was to become the first Falkland Stampede.

Ever since that day, the Falkland Stampede has brought people together in a shared love and celebration of the good things in life – the outdoors, good clean competition, and ice cream.

One of the top 12 biggest pro rodeos in Canada, it has been hosting professional competitions since 1969 and is affectionately known by many as the biggest little rodeo in Canada.

The Falkland Stampede is one of many events and community celebrations that received support to continue tourism attractions and long-held traditions as part of the B.C. Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund in 2023.

Clean waters and abundant fisheries

Clean water, riparian areas and coastal ecosystems are critical to the economies of rural communities. They deliver the safe drinking water that people rely on, protect and mitigate against natural disasters and support a wide variety of fisheries.

Abundant fisheries create strong foundations for diverse economies. Geoduck, urchin, spot prawns, salmon, herring roe, crab, scallops, clams, mussels and halibut are just some of the many high-value seafoods that rely on a clean B.C. coast to thrive. Each fishery has its own seasons, ways of harvesting and processing, and eager customers here and overseas.

As part of building a strong future for people in B.C., we're investing in projects that will safeguard clean drinking water, protect watersheds, restore ecosystems and provide a strong basis for the recovery of key species, such as salmon, that are struggling.

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO SUPPORT WILD SALMON RECOVERY

Just like salmon connect salty ocean waters to the rivers and lakes of the Interior, they also bring people in B.C. together. Wherever wild salmon are, they support strong traditions, ecosystems and economies.

Salmon are important to First Nations, who have food, social and ceremonial harvesting rights. It's



also a critical staple in the cupboard or freezer for many families in rural B.C., especially in remote communities where food can be more costly and difficult to access.

Salmon also supports a vibrant tourism industry, with people coming to B.C. from all over the world to experience reeling in a feisty chinook or tempting a steelhead to strike from the shallows of a river with a well-cast fly.

And salmon are also critical to the commercial fishery, which supplies most B.C. families with the salmon they eat and provides jobs in harvesting for people in many rural and coastal communities.

Many populations of salmon in B.C. have declined over the past few decades. The reasons for this are complex and not always fully known.

What we do know is all who rely on salmon – whether for food, for social and ceremonial reasons, or for work – have a shared interest in seeing these incredible fish return to the rivers they were born in for countless generations to come.

As part of making sure that happens, the province is investing in wild-salmon restoration projects throughout B.C.

Actions and Investments

- Supporting the recovery of salmon stocks that are in decline by creating and strengthening the B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund in partnership with the federal government.
 - Launched in 2019, the province and federal government doubled their support for wild salmon recovery in 2022, bringing the total funding available to address climate-change impacts to salmon, restore priority salmon populations, and bolster Indigenous participation in salmon restoration to \$285.7 million.
- Supporting additional salmon habitat protection and restoration projects with a \$17.25-million grant to the First Nations Fisheries Council and the Pacific Salmon Foundation in 2023.

KUS-KUS-SUM RESTORATION

There was once a village named Kus-Kus-Sum along the Courtenay River. Nearby, on the northern side of the river, where it meets the K'ómoks Estuary, were the burial grounds where people from this village laid their loved ones to rest.

In the late 1940s, trees were cleared from this site so a sawmill could be built and later, in the 1970s, much of the marsh between the Courtenay River and Comox Road was filled in by the mill's

owners, destroying important habitat for salmon and weakening the integrity of the watershed.

Since 2018, K'ómoks First Nation, Project Watershed and the City of Courtenay have worked in partnership to restore this important area with support and funding from the province. This work to restore the K'ómoks Estuary, funded by the Healthy Watersheds Initiative through StrongerBC, illustrates how protecting and enhancing watersheds can advance reconciliation and bring people together in a shared vision of a stronger, more abundant and healthier future.

PROTECTING WATERSHEDS FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

Healthy watersheds provide clean water to ecosystems and communities and reduce the risks and impacts of floods, droughts and wildfires. As our climate changes, and weather becomes more extreme and unpredictable, it's more important than ever to work together to restore watersheds and make them more resilient.

Watersheds are the lifeblood of B.C. and for too long not enough has been done to protect them. The province is changing that by working with First Nations to co-develop a watershed security strategy that will safeguard watersheds for today and future generations. Flowing from and complementing the strategy, a new Watershed Security Fund is providing the resources needed to continue the work done to restore rivers and wetlands, provide spawning grounds for salmon and protect aquatic ecosystems and the animals and plants that rely on them through StrongerBC's Healthy Watersheds Initiative.

It's been estimated that as many as 48,000 people in B.C. have jobs that rely on watersheds, many of them in rural B.C. where most of the province's watersheds are. Together, watersheds in B.C. are estimated to generate \$5 billion in economic activity each year. This makes protecting and enhancing watersheds integral to our vision of a strong economic future for rural communities.

Actions and Investments

- Actualizing reconciliation, preparing for climate change, and protecting the clean water that people and ecosystems rely on by co-developing a Watershed Security Strategy with First Nations.
- Creating jobs, promoting food security and safeguarding the well-being of communities into the future with a \$100-million Watershed Security Fund.
 - This investment is in addition to the \$30 million provided to launch the fund as part of Budget 2022.
 - The fund also builds on work done to restore rivers and wetlands, create spawning grounds for salmon and expand protection for aquatic species as part of the Healthy Watersheds Initiative, which was developed and delivered with a \$27-million investment as part of the StrongerBC economic plan.
- Creating jobs while cleaning up plastics and other pollution from coastlines with an additional \$25-million investment in the Clean Coast, Clean Waters Initiative Fund in 2023.
 - Previous projects have removed derelict vessels and cleaned up marine debris from more than 4,600 kilometres of shoreline, while creating more than 1,700 good jobs in coastal communities.

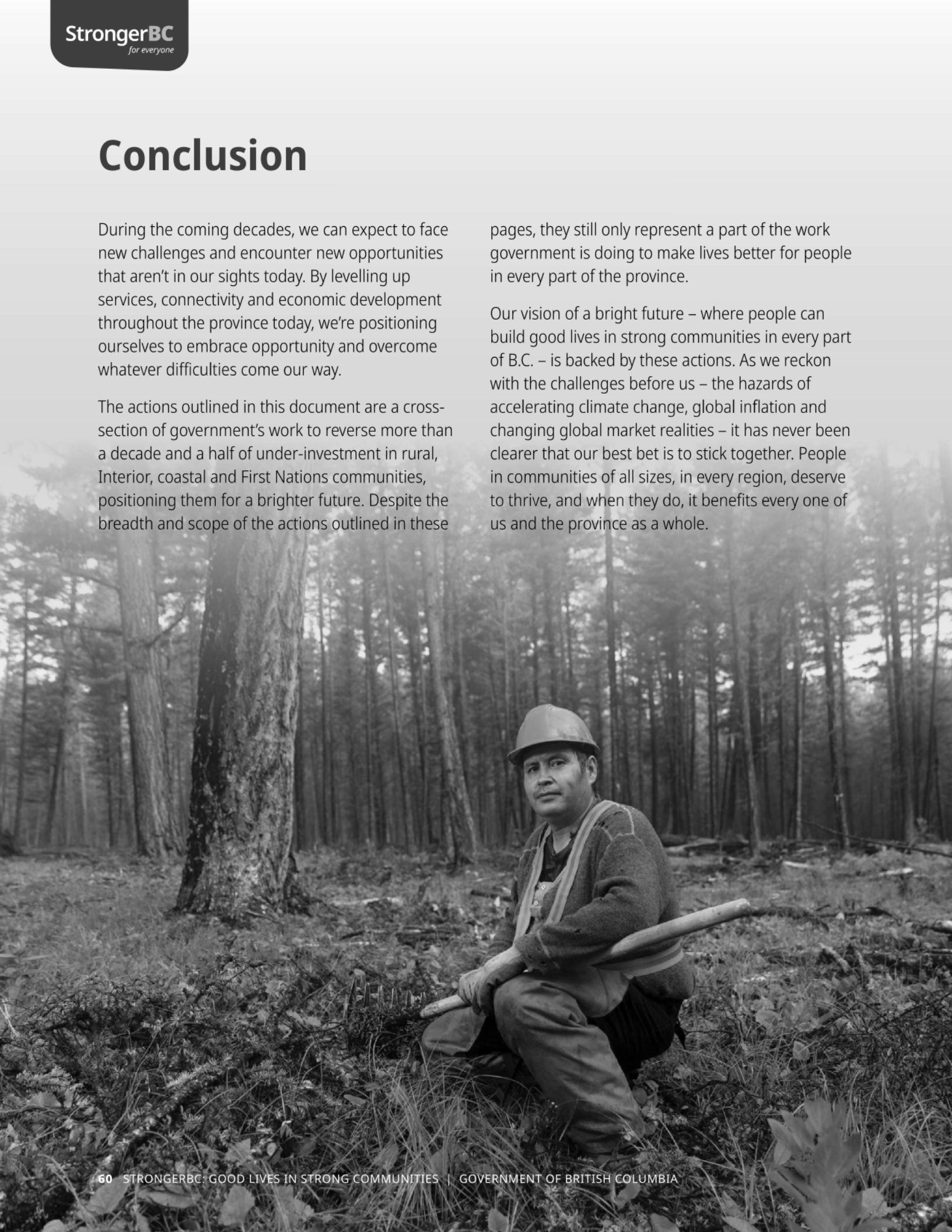
Conclusion

During the coming decades, we can expect to face new challenges and encounter new opportunities that aren't in our sights today. By levelling up services, connectivity and economic development throughout the province today, we're positioning ourselves to embrace opportunity and overcome whatever difficulties come our way.

The actions outlined in this document are a cross-section of government's work to reverse more than a decade and a half of under-investment in rural, Interior, coastal and First Nations communities, positioning them for a brighter future. Despite the breadth and scope of the actions outlined in these

pages, they still only represent a part of the work government is doing to make lives better for people in every part of the province.

Our vision of a bright future – where people can build good lives in strong communities in every part of B.C. – is backed by these actions. As we reckon with the challenges before us – the hazards of accelerating climate change, global inflation and changing global market realities – it has never been clearer that our best bet is to stick together. People in communities of all sizes, in every region, deserve to thrive, and when they do, it benefits every one of us and the province as a whole.





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for everyone

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Ministry of Citizens' Services

2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan

February 2024



For more information on the Ministry of Citizens' Services contact:

PO BOX 9440
STN PROV GOVT
VICTORIA, BC
V8W 9V3

1-800-663-7867

Or visit our website at

<https://www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/citizens-services>

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Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Citizens' Services 2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared.

Honourable George Chow
Minister of Citizens' Services
February, 2024

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Strategic Direction

In 2024/25, the Government of British Columbia will remain focused on providing the services and infrastructure that people depend on to build a good life. Government will continue delivering results that matter to British Columbians including helping people with costs, attainable and affordable housing, strengthened health care, safer communities, and a secure, clean, and fair economy. Government will continue working collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples as it implements the Action Plan for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and delivers initiatives that advance reconciliation in ways that make a difference in communities throughout the province.

This 2024/25 service plan outlines how the Ministry of Citizens' Services will support government's priorities, including the foundational principles listed above and selected action items identified in the December 2022 Minister's Mandate Letter.

Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Citizens' Services brings innovation, value and service excellence to the public service and people in B.C. In support of this, the Ministry works with its partners to create opportunities, find innovative solutions, and implement the changes that support and enable government to achieve its priorities for people in B.C. The Ministry is guided by several pieces of provincial legislation.

Dedicated to making life better for people in B.C., the Ministry provides accessible multi-channel services through a single-point-of-contact service approach to people in urban and rural communities through Service BC, and delivers the digital face of government at www.gov.bc.ca.

To help people connect to government supports and services, including virtual healthcare and online learning, the Ministry supports the expansion of high-speed internet connectivity in rural and remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities throughout our geographically vast and diverse province. Internet connectivity supports job growth, a strong and diversified economy, healthcare delivery and resilient communities. The Ministry also supports the expansion of cellular connectivity along highways, improving public safety and access to emergency services, especially along rural and remote stretches.

In addition, the ministry provides expertise to government including supporting public engagement and designing better services with public input through service design and improving the government's online presence through user testing.

The Ministry provides strategic direction across government to strengthen information-management and technology, by improving transparency and access for people in B.C. This includes responding to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and providing trusted data

services, statistical and economic research and analysis to businesses and the public sector. It also includes strengthening privacy practices to ensure personal information is protected.

The ministry manages and aligns government's real estate assets and facilities-related services, technology systems, infrastructure, and equipment with the changing nature of the work environment, including the procurement of high value contracts critical to delivering technology services to government and the broader public sector. These technologies also enable the ministry to support multiple government response organizations during, for example, wildfires and floods.

With a goal of creating more opportunities for businesses of all sizes to engage in government procurement, including increased participation by Indigenous businesses and communities, the ministry is working to support a resilient vendor marketplace and increased business opportunities to create rewarding jobs that benefit individuals, families, and communities across the province. The ministry also serves other ministries, the broader public sector and people in B.C. in full cost-recovery business areas including publishing and printing solutions via [King's Printer](#), Asset Investment Recovery, [BC Mail](#) and Product Distribution Centre.

Operating Environment

There are many internal and external factors that may affect the operating environment of the ministry in achieving its strategic direction, including social change, shifting demographics, technological innovation, and global market uncertainty. Climate hazards, such as extreme heat events, wildfires and floods can impact service delivery at government buildings and make government building infrastructure vulnerable. Working collaboratively with various levels of government, Indigenous partners, interested parties and the private sector impacts the ministry's work and implementation of priorities; for example, partnering with all levels of government and the private sector to expand access to high-speed internet to all households across the province by 2027.

Evolving expectations of the people in B.C. are changing the way government does business; people expect to access government services through multiple channels, including digital channels. To that end, the ministry is aiming to provide improved, easy-to-use services and information for all people, equitably, across the province. As people's expectations for service delivery evolve and with emerging technologies, the ministry needs to be responsive to facilitate multi-channel service delivery, access to information, and coordinated information and services to the public.

There is increased expectation for government openness, transparency, and accessibility. The rapid evolution of technology has enormous potential to support service delivery improvement. At the same time, government is also managing the vast amount of information it collects, uses, and produces in daily operations while protecting privacy and ensuring accountability.

Recruitment and retention of skilled staff is critical to meeting ministry goals and objectives. Maintaining a high quality of service requires an engaged workforce that is prepared to meet

the expectations of changing service demands. The ministry continues to embrace the opportunities presented to redefine services and improve how people in B.C. engage and interact with government.

Economic Statement

B.C.'s economy posted modest growth last year as interest rate increases weighed on the economy, and employment continued to expand, supported by immigration. Inflation in the province continued to ease and the Bank of Canada has not raised its policy interest rate since July 2023. The impact of higher rates on borrowing costs and elevated household debt led to lower consumer spending and reduced home sales. Lumber, natural gas and coal prices declined in 2023, reducing the value of the province's goods exports. Meanwhile, there was a record number of housing starts in the province in 2023. There is uncertainty over the transmission of high interest rates to the residential construction sector and the duration of slower growth for the rest of the economy in B.C. and among our trading partners. The Economic Forecast Council (EFC) estimates that B.C. real GDP expanded by 0.9 per cent in 2023 and expects growth of 0.5 per cent in 2024 and 2.1 per cent in 2025. Meanwhile for Canada, the EFC estimates growth of 1.1 per cent in 2023 and projects national real GDP growth of 0.5 per cent in 2024 and 1.9 per cent in 2025. As such, B.C.'s economic growth is expected to be broadly in line with the national average in the coming years. The risks to B.C.'s economic outlook continue to center around interest rates and inflation, including the risk of price increases stemming from geopolitical conflicts, the potential for interest rates remaining higher for longer, and uncertainty around the depth and timing of the impact on housing markets. Further risks include ongoing uncertainty regarding global trade policies, lower commodity prices, climate change impacts and the volatility of immigration levels.

Performance Planning

Goal 1: Support a strong, sustainable, and innovative economy by making it easier to participate in government procurements and create opportunities for communities across the province.

Through updated procurement and business registration services and engagement across the province, the ministry will continue to explore how to improve government procurement and create opportunities for small, medium, and large-sized businesses, including those in rural and Indigenous communities.

Objective 1.1: Create opportunities for small, medium, and large businesses to access government procurements.

Value for money is maximized when the contract types and procurement processes are scaled to meet business needs and align with the market, rather than a “one size fits all” approach. This enables a broad-based supplier community, including Indigenous businesses, and promotes supply resiliency for the timely delivery of government’s services and requirements.

Key Strategies

- Continue to create culturally appropriate procurement practices and help build procurement capacity for Indigenous businesses, communities, and government employees through the [Indigenous Procurement Initiative](#).
- Provide leadership for continued upfront planning, engagement, and collaboration with small, medium, and large suppliers in communities across B.C. to make it easier for them to do business with government.
- Evolve and update the [BC Procurement Strategy](#), to make it easier for businesses of all sizes to work with government and create opportunities for communities across the province.
- Continue to develop policies, standards, and guidance for government procurement processes to help improve Indigenous, social, environmental, and economic outcomes for businesses and communities across the province.
- Promote procurement of Information Technology solutions that best leverage industry expertise, increase flexibility, and provide more value for both government and suppliers.

Discussion

The strategies under this objective will create more opportunities for business—regardless of their size—to participate in government procurement by increasing capacity, responding more effectively to changes in markets and enhancing user experience. Planned milestones include:

- Co-develop an action plan to identify and implement actions under the [Indigenous Procurement initiative](#) through an external advisory committee that includes representatives from Indigenous businesses and communities.
- Continue to conduct Discovery Day sessions based on past success, where government presents their challenges, allowing vendors to get a better understanding of government’s needs and submit potential solutions.
- Update the [BC Procurement Strategy](#), with a clear focus on the needs of the people in B.C., buyers, and suppliers to work towards a more equitable, accessible, and sustainable economy for everyone.
- Continue to monitor the Impact Procurement project through information and data collection. All purchases have the potential for economic, social, Indigenous, or environmental impact. This multi-year pilot project is testing a broadened scope of

government's social impact purchasing guidelines and will help to develop the policies, standards, and guidance necessary to use purchasing power to improve Indigenous, social, environmental, and economic outcomes.

Objective 1.2: Enhance the experience for businesses when interacting with government.

Improving procurement and business registration services results in efficiencies for both government buyers and businesses wishing to do business with government. Making it easier for buyers to do business can increase participation in procurement processes, which results in increased business opportunities and economic growth for everyone in B.C., including in rural and Indigenous communities.

Key Strategies

- Continue to enhance extra-provincial business registration by improving BC Registry platforms, allowing for easier access and verification, and creating a consistent user experience.
- Continue to streamline and simplify BC Registry Services to make it easier for people to startup and maintain a business in B.C.
- Continue to enhance digital security ensuring business information remains secure when accessed through government channels.
- Simplify procurement interactions between government buyers and suppliers by expanding the [Digital Marketplace](#).
- Explore changes that can be made to be more inclusive of Indigenous languages in business name registration.

Discussion

The strategies noted above will make it easier for business to work with government. By creating the conditions for responsive service delivery, the ministry can continuously enhance the experience for businesses that wish to conduct business with government. This flexibility is particularly important for the [Digital Marketplace](#), which must be adaptive to the quickly changing business landscape in the technology sector.

In partnership with multiple service providers across government and the broader public sector, the ministry is completing a multi-year project to improve and enhance Registry services and B.C. business data, focused on improving technology, security, and efficiency, to streamline access to business information and support services for people in B.C.

The factors that may impact the Ministry's ability to realize these objectives, include the availability of qualified technical resources and partner readiness as government systems are transitioned away from a mainframe infrastructure.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2011/12 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
1a Satisfaction with services to businesses provided by Service BC. ¹	89%	Biennial survey; next survey in 2024/25	89%	Biennial survey; next survey in 2026/27	89%

Data source: BC Stats.

¹ The margin of error is ± 2% at the 95% confidence level.

Discussion

Progress is measured on biennial business satisfaction surveys that focus on the overall experience when accessing government programs and online services. The survey results reflect the overall experience that business representatives have with Service BC when requesting or receiving support.

Service BC strives to reach a business satisfaction score of 89%, which indicates Service BC met businesses' needs in a convenient and timely manner. Business satisfaction levels are evaluated using a survey conducted by BC Stats on a biennial basis. Data provided by these surveys are used to inform continuous improvement efforts in service delivery.

Goal 2: Provide greater public accountability by improving access to government information, while ensuring the protection of privacy.

Access to, use, and protection of government information and data is the foundation of a functioning democracy and is a fundamental duty of the public service. Government information, including data, allows for evidence-based decision making and innovation to better meet the needs of the people in B.C.

Objective 2.1: Enhance public access to government records.

The Ministry provides corporate leadership across government with respect to government's information management legislation, policies, practices, operations, and training. These efforts focus on improving the capacity of public servants to effectively manage government information, protect sensitive and personal information and provide timely responses to FOI requests.

Key Strategies

- Continue to streamline FOI processes and improve access to information.
- Support government bodies in creating, maintaining, and archiving government information.

- Enhance access to information and support government's commitment to open information and transparency by proactively disclosing information so that people in B.C. can access more government records without having to place an FOI request.

Discussion

The strategies noted above will work together to enhance the public's access to government records by proactively disclosing certain information to the public domain and by enhancing internal systems to improve timeliness and service delivery.

Since fiscal year 2020/21, the Ministry has committed over \$7.7M to improve FOI services to ministries. This project has resulted in the introduction of new technology and business processes to support the large volume of requests received each year while also improving the applicant experience by making processes more transparent and easier to use. All ministries were onboarded in 2023/24, making access to information services more efficient and easier for people in B.C.

The Ministry will continue to focus on establishing and developing systems, processes, and policy to support the ingestion, preservation, and access to archived government information. Progress will be monitored by the Ministry through regular reporting. Proactive disclosure is the release of government information to the public without a formal FOI request. The practice of disclosing information on a proactive basis is the best way for government to improve access to information, transparency, and accountability. The Ministry facilitates the publication of specific categories of information on behalf of government under [proactive disclosure directives](#), and progress is monitored by reports to the minister.

Objective 2.2: Improve the use, management, sharing and protection of data for all British Columbians.

The province sets the laws and policies that ensure appropriate collection, management, and use of data within government. Reliable, timely, quality data is necessary to understand and identify real workable solutions to major issues in B.C., such as systemic racism, homelessness, the impact of climate change and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. This work requires thorough consideration so that government protects people's privacy, collects only what is necessary, and analyzes data in such a way that ensures trust. Concurrently, strong cybersecurity practices are essential for the protection of sensitive information, enabling people to conduct their online transactions with confidence that the information entrusted to government is secure.

Key Strategies

- Continue to address barriers to effective use of data in delivering services to people living in B.C. more efficiently and effectively.
- With the [Anti-Racism Data Act](#) as a foundation, working with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee use the data collected through the BC

Demographic Survey to develop data standards and directives that support the safe collection and use of data to identify and address systemic racism.

- Expand the use of cross-government data and the Data Innovation Program to increase evidence-based decision making and better inform public policy including focusing on the 2023 *Anti-Racism Data Act* research priorities which were developed in consultation with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee.
- Continue to increase the data catalogued through open data initiatives, including partnering with holders of high value datasets, to showcase data available and encourage its use.
- Continue to establish and promote a distinctions-based approach to Indigenous data governance, including supporting the establishment of a First Nations-governed and mandated regional data governance centre in alignment with the First Nations Data Governance Strategy.

Discussion

The Ministry will monitor progress towards the regional information governance centre as part of the [Declaration Act Action Plan](#) and collaborate with the First Nations Summit on identified projects.

Under the *Anti-Racism Data Act*, in addition to supporting cultural safety and consideration of community harm in the production of statistics, the Ministry will report statistics or other information respecting systemic racism and racial equity for public transparency and accountability on or before June 1st every year.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2016/17 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
2a Percent of on-time Freedom of Information requests.	80%	84%	90%	90%	90%

Data source: AXIS System, the Ministry's internal Freedom of Information tracking system.

Discussion

An FOI request is a formal process to request records from a public body. Personal requests are when an individual requests their own information held by government, such as child in care records. General requests are requests for all other government information. Part of government's commitment to improve FOI service delivery is to prioritize requests from people wanting access to their personal information. The percentage of on-time responses to FOI requests measures the number of requests that were completed within the timelines defined in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. It is one way for government to measure the effectiveness of its access-to-information program.

In 2023/24, the FOI Modernization project onboarded all ministries onto a new FOI request system. Additional enhancements include improvements that speed up the review and redaction of records by the Ministry's FOI analysts, with streamlined processes and faster application performance to save time and cost.

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
2b Number of net new datasets in B.C. Data Catalogue.	145	80	100	125	160

Data source: DataBC Website - <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset>.

Discussion

By working with partners across government and the broader public sector to increase the number and breadth of datasets in the BC Data Catalogue, the ministry is improving access to data and its use to support innovation and evidence-based decision making. Increasing this data catalogue will also support innovation through open data initiatives. Transparency into data holdings also ensures greater public accountability.

In 2023, the BC Data Service released a new Data Management Policy to help ministries manage their data consistently and strategically. Among other things, the policy sets an expectation for ministries to list high-value data resources in the BC Data Catalogue for discovery and access. It is expected that the Data Management Policy will drive use of the BC Data Catalogue and an increase in the number of datasets in the catalogue over time as ministries align themselves with the policy. The 2023/24 forecast and the targets for coming years have been adjusted to reflect the time it will take ministries to align with Data Management Policy.

Goal 3: Make life better for British Columbians by delivering the services that people count on.

Social change, technological innovation, climate change, and the expectations of the people in B.C. are changing the way government interacts with those it serves. To that end, the ministry is aiming to provide improved, equitable, easy-to-use services and information, regardless of how they access or where they live in the province.

Objective 3.1: High-speed internet is expanded with increased bandwidth in rural and Indigenous communities.

The people in B.C. depend on a reliable internet service to conduct business and to access fundamental needs such as healthcare and education. This, in turn, supports job growth, a strong and diversified economy, and stronger communities. Internet connectivity is the foundation to many government priorities, including those for rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

Key Strategies

- Support the expansion of high-speed internet services (broadband) to under-served rural and Indigenous communities through the [Connecting Communities BC](#) program.
- Leverage funds from the federal government and the private sector to support investments in transport and last-mile digital infrastructure to support the expansion of high-speed internet services to every household in the province by 2027.
- Ensure all homes have access to high-speed internet services through a mix of technologies – including fibre, cable, fixed wireless, and satellite.
- Improve access to 911 and emergency services along highways by expanding cellular connectivity along under-served highway segments.

Discussion

On March 8, 2022 the [governments of British Columbia and Canada announced an agreement to invest up to \\$830 million \(\\$415 million each\)](#) to support expanding broadband infrastructure in the province to all under-served households by 2027. Current funding for projects is administered through the [Connecting Communities BC](#) program. This is the next generation of the [Connecting British Columbia](#) program and a key part of the [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#) and the Stronger BC: [Good Lives in Strong Communities vision](#).

The first intake of the Connecting Communities BC program was launched in September 2022 and the most recent in January 2024. Subsequent intakes will be launched as required, until the program has achieved its goal of 100 per cent of households having access to an internet service by 2027 of at least 50 megabits per second (Mbps) download speed and 10 Mbps upload speed.

The Ministry is supporting the expansion of cellular service to an additional 550 kilometres of primary and secondary highways by 2027, with \$75 million in funding from Budget 2023. This funding is being disbursed through the Cellular Expansion Fund, administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust, and will support expanding connectivity to more highway stretches in B.C. than ever before, improving public safety by providing the ability for travelers to connect with first responders in an emergency.

Objective 3.2: Government services are accessible, effective, and efficient.

The Ministry strives to provide improved, easy-to-use, culturally relevant, and accessible services and information for all people, equitably, regardless of how or where they live in the province.

Key Strategies

- Continue to work with partners, industry, and the public to improve government services and leverage best-in-class digital tools that enhance cross-sector

coordination and collaboration and provide services that are efficient, equitable and prioritize user experience, including supporting government wide adoption of the [Digital Code of Practice](#).

- Develop an artificial intelligence (AI) policy framework to guide ministries in their development and use of AI systems, and safeguard privacy and security.
- Continue to enhance equity in government services by establishing data management policies, standards, and guidelines—including digital accessibility guidance, accommodating Indigenous language names and updated gender and sex codes in government systems and services—and supporting other ministries in their implementation of this guidance.
- Continue to improve the overall accessibility and inclusion in government buildings including physical accessibility features, signage and wayfinding, and inclusive washrooms.

Discussion

The Ministry is working to provide improved, easy-to-use services and information for all people, equitably, across the province and ensure that services are accessible, inclusive, and connected throughout the province regardless of how people want to interact. This includes providing guidance to ministries, supporting investments in digital services, helping ministries hire digital experts to design and build human-centred, informed digital services, providing shared technology products and services to support multi-channel service delivery, establishing mobile outreach, and exploring virtual assistance technologies.

AI presents opportunities for government to save time, create efficiency and improve services to the people in B.C., but also has unique limitations and risks. Government is developing an AI policy framework to enable thoughtful and responsible use of AI that will provide best practice guidance on developing and using AI systems responsibly and transparently, governing with clear values and ethics and safeguarding privacy and security. The Office of the Chief Information Officer issued interim guidance on the use of generative AI tools that encouraged careful use and provided information on its limits and risks.

The Ministry works across government, helping to ensure information related to public health information campaigns (COVID-19, seasonal influenza, etc.) and critical emergency and recovery related information, is easy to read and find. Additionally, the Ministry leads government's engagement efforts, speaking to and hearing from people who have lived experience or may be impacted, helping ensure policies, programs and legislation are informed by the people who matter most.

Through a cross-Ministry government working group, the Ministry will support the adoption of Indigenous languages in systems and services related to the reclamation of traditional names.

Government is working to transition its vehicle fleet of internal combustion engines to zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) to meet emission reduction and vehicle uptake targets.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2022/23 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
3a Percentage of households in B.C. with access to internet services at a minimum speed of 50/10 Mbps.	95.2%	96%	97%	98%	99%

Data source: Federal [High-Speed Internet Access Dashboard](#), Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (October 2023) and Ministry projections.

Discussion

The province develops strategies and programs that support service providers to expand broadband infrastructure in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. This performance measure demonstrates the level of success in providing access to high-speed internet to all households by 2027.

This performance measure has been updated to measure the percentage of households with access to high-speed internet services as it is more inclusive of the population that live outside of communities. This allows for a more granular approach to capture under-served households in the province and is consistent with how other provinces, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada are reporting connectivity. This new approach is a step forward from the previous measurement of the number of communities who benefitted from investments in high-speed internet, which was last published the [2023/24 – 2025/26 Service Plan](#) and [2022/23 Annual Service Plan Report](#).

The targets presented for the next three fiscal years are based on aggregated federal data from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada combined with Ministry projections and are subject to change. Numbers will be refined, and targets adjusted in coming years as the province tracks all homes being served with high-speed internet in 2027.

This measure does not consider the uptake usage or subscription rate (i.e., end-use), and does not include access to cellular service. There are several factors that may impact the province's ability to realize these targets, including climate change-related weather emergencies, short build seasons in some areas, and third-party ability to expand services quickly in very remote areas.

Performance Measures	2012/13 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
3b Citizen satisfaction with the Contact Centre. ^{1,2}	90%	Biennial survey; next survey in 2024/25	85%	Biennial survey; next survey in 2026/27	85%
3b Citizen satisfaction with the Service BC Centres. ¹	90%	Biennial survey; next survey in 2024/25	90%	Biennial survey; next survey in 2026/27	90%

Data source: BC Stats.

¹ The margin of error is $\pm 1\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

² As of January 1, 2020, our contact centre aims for a satisfaction score of 85%. The target was changed to align with industry-leading standards for public sector organizations.

Discussion

This measure is based on biennial surveys that focus on the overall citizen experience when people access government programs and services, either in person through the province's 65 [Service BC Centres](#) or by telephone through the Service BC Provincial Contact Centres. The measure shows how satisfied people are with overall quality when they access government programs and services.

Service BC Centres target 90% satisfaction, while the Contact Centre strives to reach 85% satisfaction, which indicates people's needs are met in a convenient and timely manner. Data provided by these surveys are used to inform continuous improvement efforts in service delivery.

Financial Summary

(\$000s)	2023/24 Restated Estimates ¹	2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
Operating Expenses				
Services to Citizens and Businesses	34,776	36,604	36,604	36,604
Office of the Chief Information Officer	2,023	2,288	2,288	2,288
BC Data Service	28,753	29,757	29,757	29,757
Connectivity	23,981	24,167	24,167	24,167
Procurement and Supply Services	10,324	11,648	11,656	11,656
Real Property	364,897	378,711	375,229	375,232
Enterprise Services	173,878	176,294	176,294	176,294
Corporate Information and Records Management Office	24,644	25,638	25,638	25,638
Government Digital Experience	9,484	9,755	9,755	9,755
Executive and Support Services	10,010	10,415	10,415	10,415
Total	682,770	705,277	701,803	701,806
Capital Expenditures				
BC Data Service	110,000	110,600	110,000	110,000
Procurement and Supply Services	753	403	150	150
Real Property	259,610	233,595	97,526	183,936
Enterprise Services	54,449	46,904	47,104	22,632
Executive and Support Services	210	553	210	210
Total	425,022	392,055	254,990	316,928
Other Financing Transactions				
Real Property – Strategic Real Estate Services				
Disbursements	2,300	2,100	4,200	4,200
Receipts	(700)	(300)	(600)	(600)
Net Cash Requirements (Source)	1,600	1,800	3,600	3,600
Total Disbursements	2,300	2,100	4,200	4,200
Total Receipts	(700)	(300)	(600)	(600)
Total Net Cash Requirements (Source)	1,600	1,800	3,600	3,600

¹ For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2023/24 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2024/25 Estimates.

* Further information on program funding and vote recoveries is available in the [Estimates and Supplement to the Estimates](#).

Capital Expenditures

The Nanaimo Correctional Centre Project is reported by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, as the project lead for reporting purposes. The capital budget for this project resides with the Ministry of Citizens' Services.

Ministry of Citizens' Services

2022/23
Annual Service Plan Report

August 2023



For more information on the Ministry of Citizens' Services, please contact us at:

PO BOX 9440

STN PROV GOVT

VICTORIA, BC

V8W 9V3

1-800-663-7867

Or visit our website at: www.gov.bc.ca/citz

Published by the Ministry of Citizens' Services

Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Citizens' Services 2022/23 Annual Service Plan Report compares the Ministry's actual results to the expected results identified in the 2022/23 - 2024/25 Service Plan published in 2022. I am accountable for those results as reported.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Beare".

Honourable Lisa Beare
Minister of Citizens' Services
August 10, 2023

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Letter from the Minister

The Ministry of Citizens' Services (the ministry) 2022/23 Annual Service Plan Report provides a summary of our achievements and progress made over the past year to support people in British Columbia (B.C.).

The ministry plays a vital role in delivering the services that people in B.C. count on. Cross-government data is used to make evidence-based decisions when creating policies and programs. Behind every piece of data is a human story and good data has the power to enable better services—one example of our work is the gender and sex data standard which we released this past year. It improves how government collects and uses data to support the creation of policies and programs to serve B.C.'s diverse population.

We continue to implement the *Anti-Racism Data Act* (ARDA). The first of its kind in Canada, ARDA came into effect in June 2022 and will enable the collection of data through BC Stats to help dismantle systemic racism and build strong government programs and services for Indigenous, Black, and other people of colour.

We're also working with partners and across government to continuously modernize digital services as highlighted by our new [Digital Plan](#), which sets objectives to transform the way government delivers online services. A digital milestone we are incredibly proud of is that the [BC Services card application](#) is now being used by over two million people. Through this app people can access everything from medical records to student loans or to renew their automobile insurance. We are providing digital services such as email, webchat, and text services as well as in-person and telephone service to remove barriers for people in B.C.

Each year, the Province spends billions of dollars on goods, services, and infrastructure projects. Through public procurement we're also advancing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples to improve social and environmental outcomes and promote innovation for the goods and services government procures.

In March 2022, the Province partnered with the federal government to provide up to \$830 million to expand high-speed internet services to connect all remaining rural and First Nations households in the Province. In March 2023, the province committed another \$75 million to expand cellular coverage along the province's highways to improve public safety and natural disaster response capacity.

At the core of the ministry's work is listening and responding to the priorities of people in B.C. Together, we are delivering results in ways that people in B.C. can see, feel, and touch, and that change their lives for the better.

I am proud of my ministry's accomplishments over the past year and look forward to delivering more of the services people in B.C. depend on.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Beare". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Honourable Lisa Beare
Minister of Citizens' Services
August 10, 2023

Purpose of the Annual Service Plan Report

This annual service plan report has been developed to meet the requirements of the [Budget Transparency and Accountability Act](#) (BTAA), which sets out the legislative framework for planning, reporting and accountability for Government organizations. Under the BTAA, the Minister is required to report on the actual results of the ministry's performance related to the forecasted targets stated in the service plan for the reported year.

Strategic Direction

The strategic direction set by Government in 2020 and Minister Beare's [2020 Mandate Letter](#) shaped the goals, objectives, performance measures and financial plan outlined in the [Ministry of Citizens' Services 2022/23 – 2024/25 Service Plan](#) and the actual results reported on in this annual report.

Purpose of the Ministry

[The ministry](#) brings innovation, value and service excellence to the public service and people in B.C. In support of this, the ministry works with our partners to create opportunities, find innovative solutions, and implement the changes that support and enable government to achieve its priorities for people in B.C. [The ministry is guided by several pieces of provincial legislation.](#)

Dedicated to making life better for people in B.C., the ministry provides accessible multi-channel services through a single-point-of-contact service approach to people in urban and rural communities through [Service BC](#), and delivers the digital face of government at www.gov.bc.ca. To help people connect to government supports and services, including virtual healthcare and online learning, the ministry enables the expansion of high-speed internet connectivity throughout this geographically vast and diverse province. Internet connectivity supports job growth, a strong and diversified economy, healthcare delivery, and resilient communities. The ministry also supports the expansion of cellular connectivity along highways as it is critical for public safety and access to emergency services, especially along rural and remote stretches. In addition, the ministry supports other ministries with public engagement to reach out and learn from people in B.C. on issues that matter to them.

The ministry provides strategic direction across government to modernize information-management and technology and improve transparency and access for people in B.C. This includes responding to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and providing trusted data services, statistical and economic research and analysis to businesses and the public sector. It also includes strengthening privacy practices to ensure that people in B.C.'s information is protected. The ministry also manages government's real estate assets and facilities-related services, technology systems and equipment, including the procurement of high value

contracts critical to delivering technology services to government and the broader public sector.

With a goal of creating more opportunities for businesses of all sizes to engage in government procurement, including increased participation by Indigenous businesses and communities, the ministry is working to support a resilient vendor marketplace and increased business opportunities to create rewarding jobs to benefit individuals, families, and communities across the province. The ministry also serves other ministries, the broader public sector and citizens in full cost recovery business areas including publishing and printing solutions via [King's Printer](#), asset investment recovery, [BC Mail](#) and product distribution.

Operating Environment

Throughout 2022/23, many internal and external factors affected the ministry' in achieving its strategic direction, including social change, shifting demographics, technological innovation, climate hazards, the COVID-19 pandemic recovery, and global market uncertainty. Working collaboratively with various levels of government, Indigenous partners, stakeholders, and the private sector can impact the ministry's work and implementation of priorities; for example, partnering with all levels of government and the private sector to expand high-speed internet across the province by 2027.

Evolving expectations of people in B.C. are changing the way government does business; B.C. residents and people new to B.C. expect to access government services through multiple channels quickly and easily, including digital channels. To that end, the ministry focused on providing improved, easy-to-use services and information for all people, equitably. As people in B.C.'s expectations for service delivery continues to evolve, the ministry continued to be responsive to these expectations to facilitate multi-channel service delivery, access to easy to find and read information, and coordinated and complementary services to the public.

There has continued to be an increased expectation for government openness, transparency, and accessibility, which has shaped how government managed the vast amount of information we collect, use, and produce in our daily operations while protecting privacy and ensuring accountability.

Recruitment and retention of skilled staff continued to be a priority for the ministry. To this end, the ministry continued to explore options to expand a hybrid and remote workforce across the province.

Economic Statement

After rebounding rapidly in 2021, British Columbia's economy saw slower yet strong growth in 2022. B.C.'s real GDP growth of 3.6 per cent last year was the fourth highest among provinces (tied with Ontario) and grew at the same pace as the national average, following growth of 6.2 per cent in 2021. Growth in B.C.'s real GDP was mostly supported by service-producing industries such as transportation and warehousing, accommodation and food services, and professional, scientific and technical services. Goods-producing industries also experienced growth led by construction.

While B.C.'s recovery broadened in 2022, it remained uneven as sectors such as transportation and warehousing; accommodation and food services; and arts, entertainment and recreation have yet to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels. B.C.'s labour market continued to grow in 2022, with employment growth of 3.2 per cent and an average unemployment rate of 4.6 per cent, while wages and salaries increased by 10.8 per cent. Consumer spending on goods grew slowly after a rapid expansion at the beginning of the recovery and nominal retail sales posted overall growth of 3.1 per cent. Last year, prices rose dramatically as strong demand for goods and services was met with lingering supply-chain challenges and high prices for global commodities following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In 2022, B.C.'s inflation rate averaged 6.9 per cent, the fastest annual rate since 1982, and up from 2.8 per cent in 2021. B.C. housing starts totaled 46,721 units in 2022, down 1.9 per cent compared to the previous year. Despite the decline, housing starts in 2022 were the second highest on record. Home sales fell sharply in 2022 as they adjusted to higher mortgage rates not seen since 2008. B.C. MLS home sales decreased by 35.2 per cent in 2022 compared to 2021. Meanwhile the MLS average home sale price rose by 7.4 per cent in 2022 because of strength early in the year, despite monthly declines in 9 of the last 10 months of the year.

On the external front, B.C.'s international merchandise exports grew by 20.4 per cent, boosted by strong commodity prices in the first half of 2022.

Report on Performance: Goals, Objectives, and Results

Goal 1: Support a strong, sustainable, and innovative economy by making it easier to participate in government procurements and create opportunities for communities across the province.

Objective 1.1: Create opportunities for small, medium, and large businesses to access government procurements.

Creating opportunities for businesses to access government procurements allows communities across the province to contribute towards a strong, sustainable and innovative economy.

Key results

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, established the Indigenous Procurement Initiative (IPI) External Advisory Committee (EAC) in November 2022, representing Indigenous communities, businesses, partners, and stakeholders throughout the province.
- Hosted 5 Discovery Day sessions bringing together buyers and vendors to share problem statements and share innovative solutions.
- Improved [Code With Us](#) and [Sprint With Us](#) procurement processes with feedback from the technology sector suppliers across B.C. to increase access, ensure fairness and balance procurement participation costs.
- Launched the new [BC Bid Platform](#) in May 2022 with more than 300 broader public sector organizations registered.

- Improved and scaled the [Digital Marketplace](#) to increase the speed, access and collaboration between technology companies of all sizes and the BC Public Service.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

The establishment of the EAC will inform and guide the ministry's work to help the province develop a coordinated approach to procurement with Indigenous businesses and to increase Indigenous Peoples' participation in government's procurement opportunities.

The continuation of Discovery Days, the launch of the new BC Bid platform and the further development of social impact purchasing will better assist businesses of all sizes understand government purchasing needs and make it easier to access government procurement opportunities. For example, Discovery Days allowed vendors to get a better understanding of government's needs and submit potential solutions. In addition, the ministry maintained a streamlined process for ministries to contract with qualified Indigenous facilitators to help ensure government's engagements with Indigenous Peoples are culturally safe.

BC Bid is the online marketplace tool that businesses use to gain access and insight into contract opportunities offered by core government and hundreds of publicly funded organizations, such as Crown corporations, health authorities, and municipalities. The new BC Bid system has streamlined the way the public sector organizations post and bid on solicitations for construction, as well as other goods and services within the province and is fully integrated with the federal government's Canada Buys posting site. In May 2022, the release of the new BC Bid application included many features that make it easier for suppliers to do business with government. It includes easier navigation, and improved search functionality for vendors to find opportunities that fit their business. The online, self-serve access allows vendors to subscribe to and renew eBidding accounts and opportunity subscriptions.

Included in the new BC Bid applications is the ability to submit eBids for certain opportunities directly within the system. Vendors have access to a personalized dashboard to manage contracting opportunities and communication with government buyers. Since the launch of the new BC Bid Platform, the ministry has offered training for government buyers, hosted information sessions for suppliers and the broader public sector, designed buyer and supplier registration and onboarding, and began onboarding users.

To facilitate more opportunities for businesses to access government procurements, the ministry was involved in the planning processes for several large government re-procurements and advised other ministries how to apply impact procurement principles under the Procurement Strategy. Additionally, from a continuous improvement perspective, the ministry supported 45 procurements through the Digital Marketplace, including 38 "Code With Us"¹ opportunities for a total value of \$1.5 million and seven "Sprint With Us"² opportunities for

¹ [Code With Us](#) is a procurement mechanism for public sector organizations in British Columbia to pay developers for code.

² [Sprint With Us](#) is a procurement mechanism that allows the B.C. Government to procure Agile software development teams.

a total value of \$8.9 million.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2017/18 Baseline	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
1.1 Number of suppliers registered with the Province's BC Bid sourcing application ^{1,2}	4,800	5,965	6,000	6,894

Data source: BC Bid database – monthly BC Bid Subscribers Report

¹PM 1.1 targets for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were stated in the 2022/23 service plan as 6,200 and 6,400, respectively. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

²Data indicates the number of suppliers who purchased e-Notification and e-Bidding subscriptions. e-Notifications allow suppliers to be alerted when opportunities that match their areas of interests are posted to BC Bid. e-Bidding capabilities allow a supplier to submit their bids electronically through BC Bid.

The 2022/23 target was achieved. This is a result of the new BC Bid application being launched in May 2022 and the retirement of the old application in December 2022. The number of suppliers who are registered with BC Bid provides a measure for the breadth of small, medium and large suppliers who do business with government in communities across British Columbia.

While this performance measure has been included in the ministry's Service Plan since 2019/20, it has been retired in the 2023-24 Service Plan as onboarding has been robust since launch of the new system.

Objective 1.2: Enhance the experience for businesses when interacting with government.

Businesses need effective and efficient ways to interact with government. Improving their experience when interacting with government ensures services remain responsive and makes it easier for them to do business with government.

Key results

- Improved resilience of single sign-on service and private cloud hosting services to ensure reliability of applications across government.
- To standardize processes and simplify procurement interactions between government buyers and suppliers, the ministry updated the [BC Procurement Resources](#) website which is the knowledge source for both buyers and vendors on procurement in B.C.'s public sector.
- The use of [Digital Marketplace](#) services expanded by 30 new vendors and three new business areas across government. New vendors include communities outside of Vancouver and Victoria, such as Kamloops.

- [BC Registries](#) successfully developed account authentication, payment, and user dashboards for the seamless onboarding of extra-provincial businesses to its new online service.
- BC Registries implemented several improvements as part of its modernization journey, including replacing multiple applications, to streamline services and make it easier for people in B.C. to start up and maintain a business in B.C.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

The replacement of the BC Bid resources website with the new BC Procurement Resources website provides users with accurate information quickly and easily. It includes the Goods and Services Catalogue, resources for BC Bid users, procurement policy and procedures, and corporate templates.

BC Registries has been undergoing a significant modernization initiative to enhance the service experience for businesses. This initiative involved the replacement of multiple applications and followed an agile, iterative, and service design approach. Progress made in 2022/23 included making it possible for cooperative associations, sole proprietorships, and general partnerships to complete all filings online making for a more seamless and secure service.

A new Personal Property Registry was launched that provides an improved user experience and ensures greater security for users. The Manufactured Home Registry has a streamlined search function and has been updated to make it easier and more convenient to transfer homes. The ministry also streamlined access to BC Registries data so that other ministries, municipalities, and programs can systematically support people in B.C. access to government services.

Service BC is committed to providing increased support to users by expanding the number of phone staff, reducing wait times, and offering further training and assistance to staff. These efforts have enhanced the ability to support citizens and improve the overall user experience. Furthermore, Service BC has been actively working on improving the user experience through better wayfinding, implementing an auto-approval process for names, and continuously seeking feedback from users.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2012/13 Baseline	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
1.2 Satisfaction with services to businesses provided by Service BC. ^{1,2}	90%	Biennial survey; next survey in 2022/23	At least 90%	75%

Data source: [BC Stats](#).

¹PM 1.2 targets for 2024/25 were stated in the 2022/23 service plan as "at least 90%"; there are no targets for 2023/24 as the survey is biennial. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

²The margin of error is $\pm 2\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

The 2022/23 target was not achieved. This is a result of the size and complexity of the ongoing modernization initiative at BC Registries and Online Services, which resulted in multiple access points that required users to navigate both the new and legacy systems at the same time during the transition period.

The ministry has worked to address these challenges and to consolidate all access points. This consolidation will alleviate navigation issues and provide a smoother user experience. The goal is to successfully transition users from multiple systems to one streamlined application.

Service BC strives to reach a business satisfaction score of at least 90%, which indicates Service BC met businesses' needs in a convenient and timely manner. Business satisfaction levels are evaluated using an arms-length survey conducted by BC Stats on a biennial basis. Data provided by these surveys are used to inform continuous improvement efforts in service delivery. The biennial survey results reflected the overall experience that business representatives have when requesting or receiving support from Service BC.

Goal 2: Provide greater public accountability by improving access to government information, while ensuring the protection of privacy.

Objective 2.1: Enhance public access to government records.

The ministry is committed to improving the Freedom of Information (FOI) systems and services so people in B.C. have timely access to the information they need.

Key results

- The ministry has committed \$5.5 million over three years to modernize the FOI process to manage the large volume of FOI requests the Province receives annually and to provide faster, more secure delivery.
- New legislated requirements for all public bodies to issue privacy breach notifications and to have a privacy management program came into force on February 1, 2023.
- A new Proactive Disclosure Directive was introduced on March 27, 2023, that requires the regular proactive publication of Parliamentary Secretaries' calendars, which brings the [total number of directives to fifteen](#).

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

In 2022/23, the ministry onboarded twelve ministries to a new government FOI system to manage FOI requests within a unified electronic service. This new unified electronic service

decreased the average hours to process an FOI request, primarily by streamlining communications between the ministry and the onboarded ministries. During that time, the ministry also prioritized FOI requests where British Columbians were waiting for access to their personal information. Continuing to modernize the FOI process as well as processing the backlog remain key priorities to ensure people receive their personal information on time. The ministry also increased the amount of information that is made available to the public on an ongoing basis without an FOI request through proactive disclosure.

New legislative requirements in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA)*, which came into force on February 1, 2023, are designed to enhance privacy protection for people in B.C. All public bodies are now required to provide notification to affected individuals and to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, if a privacy breach has occurred that could cause significant harm. They are also now required to establish a privacy management program for their organization. These enhancements should increase people's confidence that their information is secure and protected whenever they access services or provide information to government and broader public sector agencies.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2016/17 Baseline	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
2.1 Percent of on-time Freedom of Information requests. ¹	80%	81%	90%	78%

Data source: AXIS System, the ministry's internal Freedom of Information tracking system.

¹PM 2.1 targets for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were stated in the 2022/23 service plan as 90% and 90%, respectively. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

The 2022/23 target of 90% was not achieved. The processing time for responding to an FOI request in 2022/23 was significantly impacted by government's ongoing commitment to respond to and close overdue requests, in particular those most overdue. This approach resulted in a lower overall rate of 78%. The backlog has now been reduced by 38% and expectations are that on-time response rate in 2023/24 will improve as a result. Because the processing time for responding to a request is not calculated until a request is closed, a focus on closing overdue requests will negatively affect the on-time response rate for that fiscal year. When complex requests that were overdue by a year or more (approximately 8% of files closed in 2022/2023) are excluded from the total number of requests closed, government responded on time to 84% of FOI requests.

The percentage of on-time responses to FOI requests is an essential way for government to measure the effectiveness of its access to information program. This measure provides an indication of government's annual performance in responding to FOI requests within the timelines defined in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Government continues to receive a high volume of requests - averaging over 10,000 annually. The ministry is currently in the final year of a three-year project to improve and modernize FOI services in response to this high volume. This project has introduced new technology and business processes to support the large volume of requests received each year while also improving the

citizen experience by making processes more transparent and easier to use. This work has focused on improving timeliness and making access to information services easier for people to use.

Objective 2.2: Improve the use, management, sharing and protection of data for all British Columbians.

Improving how government data is used, managed, shared, and protected for people in B.C. allows government to be more accountable and transparent with the information that is being collected.

Key results

- Implemented the [*Anti-Racism Data Act*](#), which became law in June 2022, in partnership with the newly established Anti-Racism Data Committee and in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples.
- Worked with Indigenous governing entities and the Anti-Racism Data Committee to establish [*research priorities*](#) released in early 2023/24 to help eliminate systemic racism in government programs and services.
- Increased the number of integrated data projects supported by the corporate data program, expanding the use of cross-government data to increase evidence-based decision making and better-informed public policy.
- Released an enhanced user interface for the [*BC Data Catalogue*](#) that ensures people, non-profits and businesses have easier access to open data. There are approximately 1,800 data sets available through open data licences in the Catalogue.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

The ministry worked with the Ministry of Attorney General and the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Anti-Racism Initiatives to support Indigenous and community-led engagement sessions to develop the [*Anti-Racism Data Act*](#). Over 13,000 people were engaged online or in community sessions. The [*Anti-Racism Data Act*](#) enables government to collect and use demographic information such as race, gender, and ancestry to identify and eliminate systemic racism. Implementation of the act and all activities under the act are done in partnership with the Anti-Racism Data Committee and in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples. Over the last year, the ministry has worked with the Anti-Racism Data Committee and in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples to identify research priorities to guide government's work to identify and eliminate systemic racism.

The ministry released the [*Gender and Sex Data Standard*](#), specifying how and when to collect gender sex information across government, and how to collect this information respectfully. The standard makes data collection more inclusive and provides more accurate information to inform programs and services in B.C. The ministry also released [*the Core Administrative and Descriptive Metadata Standard*](#) to improve data quality and interoperability across government. The standard helps to create connected services as data can easily be shared in a

consistent way – ultimately helping to improve the public’s experience interacting with government to improve data quality and interoperability across government. The standard helps to create connected services as data can easily be shared in a consistent way – ultimately helping to improve the public’s experience interacting with government.

A new, improved BC Data Catalogue user interface was launched to provide an enhanced user experience and accessibility. This makes it easier for government users, businesses, non-profits, and public users to find and access data to inform decisions and services. Self-service options are now available, making administration of catalogue records easier and faster.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2017/18 Baseline	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
2.2 Number of datasets in BC Data Catalogue. ^{1,2}	2,750	3,172	3,050	3,350

Data source: [DataBC Website](#).

¹PM 2.2 targets for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were stated in the 2022/23 service plan as 3,100 and 3,150, respectively. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

²Includes all published data sets, including sensitive datasets only visible and accessible to government employees.

³The performance indicator has been updated in 2023/24 to track ‘net new’ datasets published in the BC Data Catalogue. Since the number of datasets published at any given time is based on new data being added and old data being retired, it is a more accurate measure to track the work. By measuring only net new data being added to the catalogue, we are more accurately measuring this strategy.

The 2022/23 target was achieved. This is a result of ongoing engagement with the data community in government and broader public sector as well as targeted communications to educate data contributors on the value of sharing their data openly, including a digital livestream event where 200 people attended.

By working with partners across government and the broader public sector to increase the number and breadth of datasets in the BC Data Catalogue, the ministry is improving access to data and its use to support innovation and evidence-based decision making. Increasing the data available will also support innovation through open data initiatives. Transparency into data holdings also ensures greater public accountability. The availability of data and associated applications helps other government departments and agencies deliver on their mandates.

Goal 3: Make life better for British Columbians by delivering the services that people count on.

Objective 3.1: High-speed internet is expanded with increased bandwidth in rural and Indigenous communities.

Expanding high-speed internet access in rural and remote and Indigenous communities supports job growth, a strong and diversified economy, and stronger communities, and allows for increased access to government services that people count on.

Key results

- The Province committed \$584 million for expanding broadband internet and cellular services in B.C., including new funding for expanding cellular services.
- Funding for new high-speed internet projects is being administered through the [Connecting Communities BC](#) program which launched new application intakes in 2022/23.
- The [Connecting British Columbia program](#), which is administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust, approved 186 projects with 632 communities expected to benefit when projects are complete.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

In March 2023, the Province committed \$75 million to expand cellular services to an additional 550 kilometres of highway by 2027. This is in addition to the commitment by the government of British Columbia and Canada in March 2022 to invest up to \$830 million (\$415 million each) to support expanding broadband infrastructure in the province to all under-served households by 2027.

Significant progress was made towards the Province's goal to provide all households with access by 2027. In March 2023, 24,000 more households had access to internet speeds of 50/10 Mbps, reducing the number of households without access from 115,000 households in B.C. to an estimated 91,132.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2018/19 Baseline	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
3.1 Number of rural, remote, and Indigenous communities that have benefited from investments in high-speed internet. ^{1,2,3}	417	600	620	632

Data source: Government of Canada: [Geolocated placenames dataset](#)

Data source: Ministry of Citizens' Services (Network BC) internal analysis.

¹PM 3.1 targets for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were stated in the 2022/23 service plan as 685 and 725, respectively. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

²The definition of 'community' refers to rural and remote communities and includes named places such as districts, Indigenous communities, municipalities, towns, and villages, as well as incorporated areas and strategic landing sites required for a network to operate. Communities may require one or more projects to be wholly served at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Universal Service Objective of 50 Megabits per second download and 10 Megabits per second upload.

³Figures represent a cumulative number of communities.

The 2022/23 target was achieved. This is a result of the ministry developing strategies and programs that enable service providers to expand broadband infrastructure in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. This performance measure demonstrates the level of success in reducing the overall gap in under-served households in the province to target completion of high-speed internet access to all households by 2027. This measure does not consider the uptake usage of users or subscription rate (i.e., end-user) and does not include access to cellular service.

Connectivity tracking across the province will transition to reporting by household, rather than by community. By looking at households the measurement is more inclusive of the population that live outside communities' boundaries. This allows for a more granular approach to capture all households in the province and is consistent with how the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, as well as other provinces, are reporting connectivity.

Objective 3.2: Government services are accessible, effective, and efficient.

People in B.C. need access to government services they count on that are readily available, effective, and efficient.

Key results

- Provided hands on support to increase online service delivery capacity across government to priority services such as the Health Gateway.
- Supported and encouraged ministries to include criteria to improve social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic benefits in their procurement processes for new contracts.
- Expanded the use of the BC Services Card authentication service to 23 new government programs in the year, bringing the total available services to 65 available through the BC Services Card. Increased public adoption of the BC Services Card app to 2 million users.
- Successfully launched [alpha.gov.bc.ca](#), a public parallel test website to gov.bc.ca that is powered by fully rearchitected and reimaged technology and infrastructure.
- Updated [Core Policy and Procedures Chapter 12 on Information Management and Information Technology \(IM/IT\)](#).

- Invested \$8.3 million in Climate Initiatives for government facilities under the [CleanBC Government Buildings Program](#).

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

The ministry continued the multi-year BC Impact Procurement (BCIP) pilot to test a broadened scope of government's social impact purchasing guidelines to help inform the policies, standards, and guidance necessary for using purchasing power to improve social, Indigenous, environmental, and economic outcomes for people in B.C.

Service BC verified 750,000 individuals' identities for the BC Services Card app, bringing the total users activated to over 2 million. Service BC has also expanded access to B.C. government services online for people without a mobile device using the BC Token, a small device that an individual can obtain from a Service BC Centre. An additional enhancement to the BC Services Card app enables access to government services for people that are not eligible for a BC Services Card, such as medical professionals from out of province.

The ministry had enhanced the accessibility of BC Services Card app. Individuals can now use various communication options, including screen readers, text-to-speech, sign language and handwritten responses to assist those who have visual, hearing, or speech impairments. Caregivers can now also assist in the identity verification process. Additionally, Service BC continues to support front-line government service delivery, including important programs such as the fall influenza campaign, mobile outreach in small or remote communities, and support for incoming Ukrainian refugees.

The ministry also partnered with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) to provide citizens with simple and easy access to government services through a single point-of-service approach, greatly reducing the requirement for citizens to attend multiple offices to access the services and assistance they need. In 2022/23, Service BC and SDPR collaborated in 47 Service BC Centres to create a more efficient one-stop-shop approach for services and eliminating the potential stigma that people may feel attending an SDPR office. Service BC staff are enabled to address the full range of citizens' service needs and expectations, creating capacity for SDPR staff to respond to more complex case management issues in a timely manner.

The launch of alpha.gov.bc.ca, which provides an improved user experience, accessibility, and mobile optimization, is a significant step toward the next generation of gov.bc.ca, as a foundation for a more personalized and service-first experience for people in B.C. The ministry continued building its knowledge of chatbot/digital assistant technology to help people find information they need and has translated content related to health information to make it more accessible to more people in B.C.

The updated Core Policy and Procedures Manual Chapter 12 on IM/IT management includes 10 digital principles that set clear expectations that the Province will design new digital products and services with people in mind so that they better meet their needs.

Critical applications like the 'Health Gateway' often use a common technical building block that helps people sign in (Single Sign On component). This component is now hosted in an environment that helps applications get back online quickly in the case of technical outages, reducing potential downtime for important services.

The ministry 2022/23 climate action efforts resulted in a 43% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from core government buildings over the 2010 baseline. B.C. government buildings are on track to reach the public sector climate leadership goal of 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions target by 2030 in line with [CleanBC](#).

The accelerated implementation of an electric vehicle charging station network at government facilities is underway with a target of over 700 stations installed across the province by the end of 2023/24.

Barrier-free accessibility is an integral consideration in investment planning and scoping of routine capital projects at government occupied facilities. Over \$16 million was invested in accessibility improvements over the last year.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2012/13 Baseline	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
3.2 Citizen satisfaction with Service BC Centres and Contact Centre. ^{1,2}	90%	Biennial survey; next survey in 2022/23	At least 90%	91%

Data source: [BC Stats](#).

¹PM 3.2 targets for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were stated in the 2022/23 service plan as biennial survey; next survey in 2024/25 and At least 90%, respectively. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

²The margin of error is ± 1% at the 95% confidence level. Citizen satisfaction is calculated as a weighted average of the in-person and telephone survey results based on the volume of citizens served by each channel.

The 2022/23 target was achieved. Service BC conducts a biennial survey that focuses on the overall citizen experience when people access government programs and services, either in person through the province's 65 Service BC Centres or by telephone through the Service BC Provincial Contact Centres. Service BC strives to reach at least 90% citizen satisfaction through this survey; this target was surpassed in 2022/23, reaching 91%.

Satisfaction levels are evaluated using an arms-length survey conducted by BC Stats. Data provided by these surveys are used to inform continuous improvement efforts in service delivery and show how satisfied people are with overall quality when they access government programs and services. The 2022/23 survey results showed in-person citizen satisfaction was 97% overall, while the Provincial Contact Centre was 85%, as per contractual goals documented with their service provider. These results were higher than the last independent survey conducted in 2020/21 demonstrating positive continued improvement for the division

as well as Service BC's dedication to high quality service delivery, extensive agent training, and "Service with Heart." With the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic ending, the ministry anticipates continued success in meeting their established targets.

Financial Report

Financial Summary

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations ¹ (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
Operating Expenses					
Services to Citizens and Businesses	31,528	841	32,369	35,044	2,675
Office of the Chief Information Officer	2,695	-	2,695	7,921	5,226
Digital Platforms and Data	23,922	942	24,864	41,851	16,987
Connectivity	13,705	87,776	101,481	104,621	3,140
Procurement and Supply Services	8,753	-	8,753	9,332	579
Real Property	362,514	10,489	373,003	378,646	5,643
Enterprise Services	173,393	9,000	182,393	141,702	(40,691)
Corporate Information and Records Management Office	22,146	-	22,146	25,789	3,643
Government Digital Experience	8,561	2,685	11,246	11,594	348
Executive and Support Services	9,428	-	9,428	11,878	2,450
Sub-total	656,645	111,733	768,378	768,378	(000)
Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual ²	-	-	-	(836)	(836)
Total	656,645	111,733	768,378	767,542	(836)
Ministry Capital Expenditures					
Digital Platforms and Data	110,000	-	110,000	93,139	(16,860)
Procurement and Supply Services	480	-	480	398	(82)
Real Property	305,718	2,659	308,377	196,432	(111,945)
Enterprise Services	47,476	-	47,476	38,491	(8,985)
Executive and Support Services	336	-	336	258	(78)
Total	464,010	2,659	466,669	328,718	(137,951)
Other Financing Transactions³					
Receipts	(1,000)	-	(1,000)	(52)	948
Disbursements	2,500	-	2,500	4	(2,496)

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations ¹ (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
Net Cash Requirements (Source)	1,500	-	1,500	(48)	(1,548)
Total Receipts	(1,000)	-	(1,000)	(52)	948
Total Disbursements	2,500	-	2,500	4	(2,496)
Total Net Cash Requirements (Source)	1,500	-	1,500	(48)	(1,548)

¹ "Other Authorizations" include Supplementary Estimates, Statutory Appropriations and Contingencies, amounts in this column are not related to the "estimated amount" under sections 5(1) and 6(1) of the *Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act* (BBMAA) for ministerial accountability for operating expenses under the Act.² The Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual of \$0.836m is a reversal of accruals in the previous year.

³ For "Other Financing Transactions", this represents Real Property, Strategic Real Estate Services (SRES).

Capital Expenditures

The Nanaimo Correctional Centre Project is reported by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, as the project lead for reporting purposes. The capital budget for this project resides with the Ministry of Citizens' Services.

Appendix A: Progress on Mandate Letter Priorities

The following is a summary of progress made on priorities as stated in Minister Beare's [2020 Mandate Letter](#).

2020 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<p>Work to ensure government services remain responsive through the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to deliver information in-person, online and, by phone in over 200 languages about the pandemic and has evolved to other health initiatives, like influenza. • Upgraded government networks and provided technical support to meet the needs of a remote workforce. • Introduced a temporary Ministerial Order under FOIPPA to modify data residency requirements and enable the broader use of communication tools for health-care workers and other public-sector staff. • As part of COVID-19 Supply Hub, led the sourcing, warehousing and distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies for sale to non-health sectors. • Continue to apply due diligence to the routine cleaning of all government spaces and in the operations and maintenance of building systems (e.g., HVAC) that meet or exceed industry standards, deliver enhanced cleaning, and modify, enhance, and remove protection measures like Plexiglas/Lexan barriers when requested by clients.

2020 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<p>Lead work to deliver high-speed connectivity throughout the province until all regions are connected to high-speed network.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ministry signed an \$830 million joint funding MOU with the federal government in March 2022. • The ministry established the new Connecting Communities BC program, with a first intake opening in September 2022. • Completed and approved projects through connectivity programming since 2017 has or will benefit more than 72,000 homes in more than 630 communities. It will also provide cellular services to more than 530 kms of highway province wide.
<p>Continue to expand the use of cross-government data to increase evidence-based decision making and better inform public policy, and assume responsibility for BC Stats.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ministry re-assumed responsibility for BC Stats in December 2020. • BC Stats produces statistics relating to all facets of life in British Columbia, including the demographic, social and economic conditions of the province and its population. Its focus is on providing key data for transparency in public decisions. • BC Stats is coordinating anti-racism research on priorities put forward by Indigenous Peoples and the provincial Anti-Racism Data Committee to help the B.C. government deliver better programs and services for everyone. • BC Stats is fielding the BC Demographic Survey— developed through engagement with Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities—to collect data to enable priority research.

2020 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<p>Support innovation, including the B.C. tech sector, through open data initiatives.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Substantially completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ministry released a new user interface for the BC Data Catalogue that ensures people, non-profits and businesses have easier access to open data. • There are approximately 1,800 data sets available on the BC Data Catalogue through open data license.
<p>Continue to improve government's public sector data security and privacy practices to ensure that British Columbian's personal information is safeguarded.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In Progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients were introduced to the ministry's next-generation big data security analytics platform. • Onboarded over 110 public sector organizations to external security services as of December 2020. • Completed findings from 2019 Internal Directory and 2020 IT Asset Management Audits. • Piloted a Digital Privacy Impact Assessment to streamline the process and enhance the identification and analysis of potential privacy risks. • Brought mandatory privacy breach notification and privacy management program requirements into effect. • Issued regulations respecting privacy breach notifications. • Issued ministerial directions that support public bodies by setting out the key components of a privacy management program.
<p>Continue to improve how procurement processes deliver benefits for people and businesses in communities across the province.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Substantially completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New BC Bid system was launched in May 2022. • Updated the BC Procurement Strategy in 2020. • The External Advisory Committee on Indigenous Procurement Initiative established in November 2022.

2020 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<p>Continue to provide British Columbians with timely access to information and ensure the system provides public accountability.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When complex requests that were overdue by a year or more (approximately 8% of files closed in 2022/2023) are excluded from the total number of requests closed, government responded on time to 84% of FOI requests. • Changes made to the FOI system reduced the FOI request backlog by 38% this fiscal year, with priority being given to the oldest files and requests from individuals seeking their own personal information. • Modernized FOI legislation, system, and services. Ministries that have been onboarded to the new, modernized system are seeing improvements, in terms of time saved for staff, improved on-time performance, and decreased number of days for an applicant to receive information in response to their FOI request.

2020 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<p>Improve access to information rules to provide greater public accountability.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In Progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ministry continued to facilitate efficient request processing through standardized practices, streamlined business processes, and continuous improvement methods. • A new Ministerial Directive was issued in 2022/2023, requiring the proactive disclosure of Parliamentary Secretaries' Calendars. In all, fifteen categories of proactively disclosed records were available to the public as of March 2023. Examples of other categories include Minister and Corporate Transition Binders, Estimates Notes and Summaries of Ministerial Briefing Notes. • Ministries disclosed a great deal of information through online repositories and interactive tools such as the BC Data Catalogue, DriveBC, and the BC Economic Atlas. There are more than 3,000 data sets on the BC Data Catalogue which increases transparency relating to government services.

2020 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<p>Support the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Anti-Racism Initiatives in the collection, housing and analysis of race-based data which will be essential to modernizing sectors like policing, health care and education.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In Progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ministry worked with the Attorney General and the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Anti-Racism Initiatives to support Indigenous and community-led engagement sessions on the approach government should take on implementing anti-racism data legislation. Engagement included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 70 community partner organizations conducting over 175 community events, with over 1,800 people attending. ○ More than 2,900 people responding to an anonymous online public survey. ○ A distinction-based process enabling recommendations from over 200 First Nations, Métis Nation BC and the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres. ○ Supported the Attorney General and the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Anti-Racism Initiatives in developing and passing the <i>Anti-Racism Data Act</i> in June 2022. ○ Established the Anti-Racism Data Committee in September 2022 to collaborate with government and ensure that the implementation of the <i>Anti-Racism Data Act</i> is informed by the expertise and lived experience of racialized people, including Indigenous Peoples.



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For inquiries contact:
Hansard Services
612 Government Street
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
250-387-3681
hansardservices@leg.bc.ca

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