



Ministry of Citizens' Services

FISCAL 2025/26 **ESTIMATES BRIEFING**

Ministry of Citizens' Services Fiscal 2025/26 Estimates Briefing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Budget Information

1. Budget Overview
2. Minister's Office Budget
3. Budget Tracking

Estimates Notes

2. Corporate Services Division

4. Minister's Mandate Letter Achievements
5. CITZ Reconciliation Summary
6. CITZ Support for Response to Forest Fires

3. Connectivity

7. Facts and Figures – Connectivity
8. B.C.'s Connectivity Status – Maps
9. Indigenous Community Connectivity
10. Cellular Coverage on Highways and Communities
11. Connecting Communities BC Program
12. Connected Coast Project
13. Connectivity Project Timelines and Permitting
14. Local Government and Community Supports
15. Internet Affordability

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4. OCIO - BC Data Service

- 16. Facts and Figures – Digital and Data
- 17. Anti-Racism Data Act Implementation
- 18. Population Projections
- 19. Indigenous Language Names in Records, ID, Systems and Services
- 20. Provincial Data Plan, Including New Data Standards

5. OCIO – Corporate Information and Records Management Office

- 21. Facts and Figures – Freedom of Information
- 22. Freedom of Information: Improving Timelines for Responding to Requests
- 23. Freedom of Information Application Fee
- 24. Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) Recent Reports and Public Statements

6. Digital Office

- 25. Digital Investment Portfolio
- 26. Digital Plan and Government Modernization
- 27. B.C.'s Cloud-smart Approach, Data Residency, Privacy and Security
- 28. Artificial Intelligence

7. OCIO - Enterprise Services

- 29. Cybersecurity
- 30. Digital Trust

This material will be proactively released.

8. Procurement and Supply Division

- 31. Facts and Figures – Procurement
- 32. Indigenous Procurement Initiative
- 33. 2024 British Columbia Procurement Plan

9. Service BC and Government Digital Experience

- 34. Facts and Figures – Service BC and Government Digital Experience
- 35. Service BC Supporting Equity of Access
- 36. Mobile Services
- 37. BC Registries Modernization
- 38. Beneficial Ownership Registries

10. Real Property Division

- 39. Facts and Figures – Real Property Division
- 40. Optimizing the Office Space Portfolio
- 41. Prince George Youth Custody Centre Future Use

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2025/26 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 10, 2025

Key Messages

- The Ministry of Citizens' Services 2025/26 net operating budget has been tabled at \$705.355 million, which represents an increase of \$36 thousand, or 0.01 percent, as compared to the 2024/25 restated net budget of \$705.319 million.
- The Ministry's capital budget for 2025/26 is \$329.287 million, which is a net decrease of \$8.419 million, or a decrease of 2.5 percent, as compared to the 2024/25 budget of \$337.706 million.

Questions and Answers:

OPERATING FUNDING

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

Answer:

The Ministry's operating budget increased by \$36 thousand or 0.01 percent this year, primarily due to:

- Budget 2025 increase of \$3.498 million to support salaries and benefits increases stemming from the Shared Recovery Mandate (British Columbia General Employees Union Collective Agreement and Excluded Management Compensation). Additionally, another

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Page 1 of 10

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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\$8 thousand increase relates to Budget 2024 decisions.

- Increase of \$12 thousand for my Minister's Office budget
- Offset by a decrease of \$3.482 million for Nanaimo Correctional Centre operating costs compared to fiscal 2024/25 where one-time costs that are incremental to the regular annual property taxes, maintenance, and amortization costs for the facility, were necessary for site remediation, moves, and start-up costs.

CAPITAL FUNDING

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

Answer:

The Ministry's capital budget decreased by \$8.419 million, or a decrease of 2.5 percent this previous year.

There is one net new capital plan increase for Budget 2025 for Real Property Division's Routine Capital of \$3.6 million. Other changes (increases/decreases) are primarily due to staging and timing of existing multi-year projects.

Main decreases for 2025/26 include:

- Tenant Improvements for buildings purchased under Strategic Acquisitions (\$9.198 million)
- Nanaimo Correctional Centre (\$6.919 million)
- Energy Smart Program (\$5.176 million)

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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- Central Heating Plant (formerly Legislative Precinct District Energy System) (\$5.000 million)
- BC Corrections Accommodation Strategy (\$4.494 million)
- SDPR Risk Review related TI's (\$3.226 million)
- Vancouver Law Courts Renovation (\$2.973 million)
- Courthouse Improvements (\$2.948 million)
- Strategic Acquisitions of Buildings (\$1.658 million)
- PSSG Land Acquisition (\$0.701 million)
- BC Corrections Segregation Strategy Renovations (\$0.680 million)
- Transformation & Technology (IM/IT) Envelope (\$0.600 million)
- Vehicles Fleet Replacement (\$0.343 million)
- Warehouse Safety & Optimization (\$0.253 million)
- Port Coquitlam Law Courts Renovation (\$0.124 million)
- Office Furniture (\$0.076 million)

These are offset by increases for 2025/26, including:

- Routine Capital funding for client-ministry projects for \$30.536 million (new capital lift is \$3.600 million, the balance is from current and prior year reprofiling)
- Strategic Transformation & Mainframe Services \$5.214 million
- Workstation Refresh \$0.200 million

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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POST ELECTION RE-ORGANIZATION

3) How was your Ministry impacted by the post-election reorganization?

- The ministry had two changes stemming from the reorganization:
 - i. Transfer of the Product Distribution Centre Pharmacy to the Ministry of Health, which included 29 positions and a fully recoverable operating budget of \$9.254 million (net impact of \$0), and
 - ii. Transfer of \$500 million of capital budget to the Ministry of Infrastructure for the construction of a new Plant and Animal Health Centre. This resulted in a restatement of our ministry capital plan, reducing it by the following amounts: FY24/25 for \$54.349 million, FY25/26 for \$14.850 million, FY26/27 for \$95.611 million, FY27/28 for \$176.118 million, FY28/29 for \$133.005 million, and FY29/30 for \$26.067 million.

Contact:

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Officer

Corporate Services
Division

Government Financial
Information

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Appendices:

- Table 1: Budget 2025 Operating Budget Changes Per Core Business Area (CITZ)
- Table 2: Budget 2025 Operating Budget Changes Per Expenditure Category (CITZ)
- Table 3: Budget 2025 Capital Budget Changes (CITZ)

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Appendix

Table 1: Budget 2025 Operating Budget Changes Per Core Business Area (CITZ)

Ministry of Citizens' Services 2025/26 Explanation of Changes in Estimates (Core Business) (\$ in Millions)				
Core Business	Estimates 24/25 Restated	Estimates 25/26	Variance	Explanation of Changes
Services to Citizens and Businesses	\$46.359	\$47.223	\$0.864	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases.
Office of the Chief Information Officer	\$2.288	\$2.397	\$0.109	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases.
BC Data Service	\$29.757	\$30.107	\$0.350	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases.
Connectivity	\$24.167	\$24.235	\$0.068	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases.
Procurement and Supply Services	\$11.648	\$12.265	\$0.617	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases, including \$0.008 million incremental change from Budget 2024.
Real Property	\$378.711	\$375.705	(\$3.006)	Decrease of \$3.482 million in Nanaimo Correctional Centre operating costs compared to fiscal 24/25 (essentially reduction is for one-time move/manage/start-up costs and site remediation cost in 2024/25). 2025/26 operating costs are for operations, maintenance, property taxes and amortization costs. This is partly offset by increase of BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases \$0.476m.
Enterprise Services	\$176.336	\$176.838	\$0.502	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Ministry of Citizens' Services 2025/26 Explanation of Changes in Estimates (Core Business) (\$ in Millions)				
Core Business	Estimates 24/25 Restated	Estimates 25/26	Variance	Explanation of Changes
Corporate Information Records Management Office	\$25.638	\$25.993	\$0.355	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases.
Minister's Office	\$0.703	\$0.715	\$0.012	Budget increase due to Minister's Office staff wage increases and travel.
Corporate Services	\$9.712	\$9.877	\$0.165	Budget increase due to BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases
CITZ Total	\$705.319	\$705.355	\$0.036	

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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Table 2: Budget 2025 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 24/25 Restated	Estimates 25/26	Variance	Explanation of Changes
Base Pay & Overtime	50	\$165.237	\$168.025	\$2.788	Budget increases primarily due to Shared Recovery Mandate for BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases (Budget 2025 \$2.79m)
Supplemental Salaries	51	\$1.177	\$1.177	\$0.000	
Employee Benefits	52	\$42.518	\$43.225	\$0.707	Budget increases primarily due to Shared Recovery Mandate for BCGEU and excluded staff wage increases (Budget 2025 \$0.71m)
Legislative Salaries	54	\$0.058	\$0.060	\$0.002	Budget increase due to Minister's Office MLA salaries
Salary & Benefits Sub-Total		\$208.990	\$212.487	\$3.497	
Operating Costs	55 - 75	\$730.836	\$727.171	(\$3.665)	Budget decrease is primarily due to Nanaimo Correctional Centre one-time operating costs compared to last fiscal.
Government Transfers	77 - 80	\$20.000	\$20.000	\$0.000	
Other Expenses	84 - 85	\$118.432	\$118.636	\$0.204	Budget increases primarily due to incremental property taxes related to Nanaimo Correctional Centre.
Gross Expenditure Total		\$869.268	\$865.807	(\$3.461)	
Internal Recoveries	88	(\$182.267)	(\$182.267)	-	
External Recoveries	89 - 90	(\$190.672)	(\$190.672)	-	
Recoveries Total		(\$372.939)	(\$372.939)	-	
CITZ Net Expenditure Total		\$705.319	\$705.355	\$0.036	

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Table 3: Budget 2025 Capital Budget Changes (CITZ)

CITZ 10-YEAR CAPITAL PLAN - BUDGET 2025 (ESTIMATES)

(\$ millions)		24/25 Budget	25/26 Budget	Change
Real Property				
	Nanaimo Correctional Centre	\$7.963	\$1.044	(\$6.919)
	Central Heating Plant	\$15.000	\$10.000	(\$5.000)
	Strategic Acquisition of Buildings	\$8.007	\$6.349	(\$1.658)
	TIs for buildings purchased under Strategic Acquisitions	\$16.198	\$7.000	(\$9.198)
	Energy Smart Program	\$7.315	\$2.139	(\$5.176)
	Courthouse Improvements	\$11.977	\$9.029	(\$2.948)
	Vancouver Law Courts Inn Renovation	\$11.341	\$8.368	(\$2.973)
	Port Coquitlam Law Courts Renovation	\$21.917	\$21.793	(\$0.124)
	BC Corrections Segregation Strategy Renovations	\$0.680	\$0.000	(\$0.680)
	BC Corrections Accommodation Strategy	\$5.607	\$1.113	(\$4.494)
	SDPR Risk Review related TI's	\$5.607	\$2.033	(\$3.226)
	PSSG Land Acquisition	\$0.701	\$0.000	(\$0.701)
	Office Furniture	\$0.576	\$0.500	(\$0.076)
	Routine Capital Envelope	\$66.705	\$97.241	\$30.536
	Subtotal	\$179.246*	\$166.609	(\$12.637)
Digital Platforms and Data				
	Transformation & Technology Funding	\$110.000	\$109.687	(\$0.313)
	Other IM/IT Funding	\$0.600	\$0.313	(\$0.287)
	Subtotal	\$110.600	\$110.000	(\$0.600)
OCIO ENTERPRISE SERVICES				
	Workstation Refresh	\$24.272	\$24.472	\$0.200
	Strategic Transformation & Mainframe Services	\$12.932	\$18.146	\$5.214
	Maintenance and Rehabilitation	\$9.700	\$9.700	\$0.000
	Subtotal	\$46.904	\$52.318	\$5.414
(\$ millions)		24/25 Budget	25/26 Budget	Change

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY SERVICES

Special Equipment

Subtotal

\$0.403	\$0.150	(\$0.253)
\$0.403	\$0.150	(\$0.253)

MINISTRY OPERATIONS

Office Equipment

Vehicles

Subtotal

\$0.010	\$0.010	\$0.000
\$0.543	\$0.200	(\$0.343)
\$0.553	\$0.210	(\$0.343)

CITZ TOTAL ESTIMATES CAPITAL BUDGET

\$337.706	\$329.287	(\$8.419)
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**The Ministry of Infrastructure was established when the new government was announced on November 18, 2024. As a result, Plant and Animal Health (CPS # LCTZSSA0861) project was transferred from the Ministry of Citizens' Services (CITZ) to the Ministry of Infrastructure (INF), pursuant to OIC 596.*

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2025/26 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 26, 2025

Key Messages:

- The operating budget for my office is \$715,000 for 2025/26, which reflects an increase of \$12,000 or 1.7 percent from last year's budget.

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, Information Technology (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 (\$119,533 annually), while my additional compensation as a Cabinet Minister is funded from my Office budget (\$59,766). (Source: [MLA Remuneration and Expenses | Legislative Assembly of BC](#))
- Pursuant to the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act, 10 percent of my compensation ($\$59,766 \times 10\% = \$5,977$) as a Cabinet Minister is held back until individual responsibilities are met.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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 for Minister's office staff are the single largest annual cost; in 2025/26 the budget for this is \$540,000 (\$431,000 in Salaries and \$109,000 in benefits chargeback).

Classification Group	Position Title	Position Level	Annual Base Pay (at Feb/25)
Management Band	Chief of Staff	Band 3 MS	\$ 123,636
Management Band	Senior Advisor	Band 2 MS	\$ 100,057
Management Band	Executive Assistant	Band 1 MS	\$ 75,190
Senior Admin & Research	Administrative Coordinator	Admin Coord	\$ 76,094
Admin Support	Administrative Assistant	Clerk 12	\$ 54,387

Total Annual Base Pay for 5 FTE's **\$ 429,364**

- Travel, general office expenses, Information Technology-related costs and tech support for Minister's Office staff and me are the other types of costs covered within my budget (see table below for budget detail).
- The 2025/26 travel budget is \$59,000 which reflects an anticipated increase in travel to remote areas of the province.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Ministry of Citizens' Services

	Fiscal 2024/25 Estimates	Fiscal 2025/26 Estimates	Change from FY25 to FY26
Base Salaries & OT	439,000	431,000	(8,000)
Supplemental Salaries	0	0	0
Benefits Chargeback	112,000	109,000	(3,000)
Employee Benefits	24,000	24,000	0
Legislative Salaries	58,000	60,000	2,000
Salaries & Benefits Sub Total	633,000	624,000	(9,000)
Public Servant Travel	38,000	59,000	21,000
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	91,000	21,000
Other Expenses	0	0	0
Other Expenses Sub Total	0	0	0
NET TOTAL	\$703,000	\$715,000	\$12,000

Average FTEs

5.0

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Contact:

Holly Cairns

Assistant Deputy
Minister and Executive
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2025/26 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 05, 2025

Questions and Answers:

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

- Please see the details below.

	(\$ millions)
2024/25 Estimates	\$705.277
Re-organization - Product Distribution Centre (PDC) Pharmacy: Transfer (from CITZ to Ministry of Health); (Gross \$9.254m, Net \$0.000m), OIC # 596	\$0.000
Restatements - IT Operating Transfer from PSSG related to the Nanaimo Correctional Centre	\$0.042
2024/25 Estimates (restated)	\$705.319
Budget 2024 Decisions (impacting Fiscal 25/26)	
• Nanaimo Correctional Centre reduction in annual operating annual costs	(\$3.482)
• BCGEU / Management wage increases	\$0.008
Budget 2025 Decisions	
• BCGEU / Management wage increases	\$3.498
• Minister's Office adjustment	\$0.012
Total Net Adjustments	\$0.036
2025/26 Estimates	\$705.355

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**2025/26 Estimates Note
Advice to the Minister**

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

Contact:

Holly Cairns	Assistant Deputy Minister and Executive Financial Officer	Corporate Services Division	Government Financial Information
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2025/26 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 4, 2025

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](#), [December 2022](#), and [February 2024](#) Minister’s mandate letters. The mandate letter(s) associated with each action item have been identified in brackets, for ease of reference. The [January 2025](#) Minister’s Mandate Letter has not been reported on because there has not been enough time since the letter was released to adequately report on progress.

Minister’s Mandate Letter (Progress Report)

Mandate Letter Item	Major Activities since December 2022
Service Modernization Work with partners and the public to modernize government services and leverage best-in-class digital tools that enhance cross-sector coordination, and provide services that are efficient, equitable, and prioritize user experience. (December 2022 and February 2024)	- Completed major projects to support greater evidence for decisions related to programs for homelessness, population growth, and post-secondary students and skilled labour. (complete) - Delivered projects on key drivers of change in B.C., including population growth, economic impacts of connectivity and rural economic resilience. (complete) - Released B.C.’s first Provincial Data Plan with actions to use government data to improve equity, support reconciliation, increase evidence-based decision making, and modernize services. (complete) - Implemented the Gender and Sex Data Standard to guide collection of this data respectfully and accurately to inform policy and program decisions to represent gender diversity. (complete) - The Freedom of Information (FOI) Modernization project is a multi-year initiative to improve FOI timeliness, service delivery, and modernize technology. (in progress) - A pilot of the new FOI system demonstrated improvements, including getting records to FOI applicants seven days faster. (substantially complete) - All ministries are now onboarded to the new FOI system, which continues to be improved with more time-saving features. (in progress)

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens’ Services

Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

Mandate Letter Item	Major Activities since December 2022
	• In partnership with the Ministry of Housing, built digital permitting tools to streamline the housing permitting process, enhancing efficiency and cross-sector collaboration between local government and the building industry. (substantially complete) • In partnership with the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, Ministry of Forests, the Public Service Agency and the Premier’s Office, re-designed the Temporary Emergency Assignment Management System (TEAMS) program to optimize resource mobilization for emergency responses. This initiative enhanced the user interface and engagement through digital tools, significantly improving accessibility and operational efficiency. (in progress) • In partnership with Residential Tenancy Branch, developed frameworks and guidelines for generative Artificial Intelligence adoption to enhancing service delivery while ensuring responsible application. (substantially complete) • In partnership with Ministry of Housing and BC Registries, supported the development and implementation of digital platforms for short-term rental enforcement. (substantially complete) • In spring 2023, the Digital Plan was published in partnership with ministries and lays out government’s strategic direction to continue to leverage technology to improve programs and services and provide supports for a digitally equipped BC Public Service. (substantially complete) • In summer 2024, the Digital Plan Progress Report was published and highlights the progress achieved in the first year of the Digital Plan and reflects the collective commitment to evolve as a digital government. It includes success stories from across ministries showing alignment to the missions and commitment to the strategic vision of the Digital Plan. (substantially complete) • Published the Digital Code of Practice (the Code), developed in consultation with the public sector and B.C. technology sector. The Code provides 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. (substantially complete) • Supported ministries service modernization initiatives through investments in the Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) Minor Capital Envelope. In 2023/24, \$120 million was invested, supporting 109 digital projects from across government. In 2024/25, the IM/IT Minor Capital budget stands at \$110.6 million. (in progress)

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2025/26 Estimates Note
Advice to the Minister

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

Mandate Letter Item	Major Activities since December 2022
	- Supported access to agile tools that increase collaboration and team efficiencies of over 5,000 public servants across government. (substantially complete) - In 2024/-25, Mobile Services attended 139 events serving just over 744 people and representing 68 government services in communities underserved or facing barriers. There are two Mobile Service Centre vans that can travel to remote communities offering government services. (complete) - New cloud-based knowledge management and telephony systems were implemented, improving reliability and functionality to improve service delivery to the people of B.C. (substantially complete) - BC Registries and Online Services replaced three of five legacy mainframe applications with modern solutions. (substantially complete) - Working across government and with input from community partners and people new to B.C., launched web information for newcomers in plain language English, French, Punjabi, Traditional and Simplified Chinese. (complete) - In partnership with the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, a new delivery model for Emergency Support Services was developed and implemented. This included the creation of a virtual evacuee reception centre, a centralized emergency monitoring tool, structured deployment processes of Service BC staff to in-person evacuee reception centres, and the ability to deploy the Service BC mobile van to assist in responding to emergencies. (substantially complete)
Cross-Government Data 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. (December 2022 and February 2024) Begin the work to address barriers to effective use of data in delivering services to British Columbians more efficiently and effectively. (December 2022 and February 2024)	- Completed major projects to provide more evidence for decisions related to programs for homelessness, population growth, and post-secondary students and skilled labour. (complete) - Delivered projects on key drivers of change in B.C., including population growth, economic impacts of connectivity and rural economic resilience. (complete) - Expanded the number of datasets available in the Data Innovation Program to 49 datasets, supporting research and evidence-based decision-making. (complete and ongoing) - Released B.C.’s first Provincial Data Plan with actions to use government data to improve equity, support reconciliation, increase evidence-based decision making, and modernize services. (complete)

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2025/26 Estimates Note
Advice to the Minister

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

Mandate Letter Item	Major Activities since December 2022
	- Implemented the Data Management Policy to consistently manage data so it can be safely shared and reused, available to inform decisions, and accessible to improve digital services. (complete) - Implemented the Gender and Sex Data Standard to guide collection of this data respectfully and accurately to inform policy and program decisions to represent gender diversity. (complete) - Increasing adoption of the common forms solution that standardizes data collection across B.C. government and enables seamless integration with other systems. This solution enhances data accessibility and security, improving transparency and user experience. (in progress)
Procurement Continue to improve how procurement processes deliver benefits for people and businesses in communities across the province. (December 2022 and February 2024) Build on the success of government's new 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. (February 2020)	- Reduced time to procure digital talent or teams to deliver services to 20 days through three innovative procurement tools in the Digital Marketplace. Since December 2022, 87 procurements totalling \$45.9 million in value have been supported through the Digital Marketplace. Adoption of Digital Marketplace services continued to grow 21 new businesses and vendors participating in the marketplace in 2024/2025. (substantially complete) - In February 2024, the ministry published the B.C. Procurement Plan outlining the work government has been doing in collaboration with businesses and communities, as well as Indigenous peoples, to modernize its procurement system. (substantially complete) - The External Advisory Committee on Indigenous Procurement Initiative (EAC), formed in November 2022, released a progress update in early 2024. The EAC continues to meet and will make recommendations and advise the Province on ways to increase Indigenous Peoples’ participation in the Province’s procurement opportunities. (in progress) - In 2023, developed and launched a third Digital Marketplace procurement service “Team With Us” (TWU). TWU creates the ability for individual Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) professionals to partner with government technical teams to modernize services. Fifteen contracts were awarded, valued at over \$3 million with a majority awarded to small businesses. (in progress) - In 2024, B.C. government corporate solicitation templates were updated to streamline and clarify instructions, new instructions were added to meet the Indigenous languages technology standards for IM/IT contracts and reformatted to meet accessibility standards. (complete)

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2025/26 Estimates Note
Advice to the Minister

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

Mandate Letter Item	Major Activities since December 2022
Anti-Racism Initiatives 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 Anti-Racism Data Act. (December 2022 and February 2024) 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. (November 2020) Ensure that your ministry makes timely progress on the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 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. (February 2020)	• Co-developed 10 sector-based anti-racism research priorities with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee for 2023 to 2025. Indigenous Peoples also identified two additional priorities focused on how government supports Indigenous data sovereignty and conducts research. • In 2024, research reports were released in the priority areas of health, education and racial diversity in the BC Public Service. (complete and ongoing) • Conducted the province-wide BC Demographic Survey, which collected information about race, Indigenous identity, and other identity factors to be used in anti-racism research projects. Over 200,000 people responded providing B.C. the data needed to do equity-based research on its programs and services. (complete) • Published statistics and other information regarding systemic racism and racial equity: (complete and ongoing) ○ In May 2023, the 2023 Release of Statistics, the Anti-Racism Data Act Progress Report (first year), and the Guide on Using Categorical Race and Ethnicity Variables was published. ○ In May 2024, the 2024 Release of Statistics included the Anti-Racism Data Act Progress Report (second year), a BC Demographic Survey Report, and three technical reports on initial findings for the 2023 to 2025 research priorities (Population Differences in Three Common Chronic Conditions in B.C., Special Education Funding Designations Across Racial Groups in B.C. and Racial Diversity in the BC Public Service). ○ In 2025, the Release of Statistics will include additional research on some of the 2023 to 2025 research priorities. • Developed resources to support anti-racism research across ministries, including online training modules, webinars for government teams, workshops for senior executive, and guidance for researchers who want to do anti-racism research in the Data Innovation Program. (complete and ongoing) • Implemented the Indigenous Languages Technology Standard outlining technical requirements ministries need to ensure any new systems or upgrades to existing systems will be compatible with Indigenous languages used in B.C. (complete) • Supported the design and delivery of public engagement on two pieces of legislation: Anti-Racism Act and Anti-Racism Data Act. (complete)

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note
Advice to the Minister

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

Mandate Letter Item	Major Activities since December 2022
Adapting to COVID-19 Work to ensure government services remain responsive through the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery. (November 2020)	- Continue to support COVID-19 vaccination, by delivering information in-person, on the web in English and 14 languages, via a chatbot and by phone in over 220 languages. This approach has now expanded beyond COVID-19 to other public health information and health topics, like influenza, respiratory illness and human papillomavirus. (in progress) - Based on the success of COVID-19 information campaign, expanded Connected Services support to Ministries who need to communicate information. (ongoing)
Connectivity Lead work to deliver high- speed connectivity throughout the province until all regions are connected to the high-speed network. (November 2020) Continue to expand connectivity to communities throughout the province to support new economic opportunities and improved access to government services. (February 2020)	- In 2022, the mandate to connect all homes to high-speed internet by 2027 was set and reflected in the StrongerBC Economic Plan, and action 4.36 of the Declaration Act Action Plan. (in progress) \$830 million joint 50:50 funding agreement signed with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and the Ministry of Citizens’ Services to fund terrestrial infrastructure to underserved homes. (in progress) - Since 2017, 217 projects with over \$1.4 billion in total project value are completed or in progress, with approximately 39,000 households, including 1,500 on First Nation reserves, requiring a connectivity solution as of January 2025. (in progress) - Economic study shows rural B.C. will generate 8.6 times the return on provincial investment meaning \$2.5 billion in short- and long-term economic benefits from an initial \$289.3 million provincial investment. (in progress)
Proactive Disclosure Continue to provide British Columbians with timely access to information and ensure the system provides public accountability. (November 2020) Improve access to information rules to provide greater public accountability. (November 2020 and February 2020) Work to maintain government's successful record of providing British Columbians with timely access to	- In 2023/2024, the Minister issued two new mandatory directives requiring the proactive disclosure of summaries of Briefing Notes provided to Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers, bringing the total number of proactive disclosure categories to 17. (substantially complete) - In 2023/2024, ministries published over 4,100 proactive disclosures under these 17 ministerial directives alone — making it easier for people to access information at their convenience, and without the need for a formal Freedom of Information request. (substantially complete) - The ministry continues to review opportunities to make high-value records available to the public through Open Information. (in progress)

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note
Advice to the Minister

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

Mandate Letter Item	Major Activities since December 2022
information and ensure the system provides public accountability. (February 2020)	- The 2022/23 Digital Investment Annual Report was published highlighting the work of the Deputy Minister’s Committee on Digital and Data and the IM/IT Minor Capital investments. (substantially complete) - In 2024, the Deputy Minister’s Committee on Digital and Data 2023/24 Digital Investment Annual Report was released. (complete)

Contact:

Holly Cairns

Assistant Deputy Minister and
Executive Financial Officer

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Services Division

Government Financial
Information

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2025/26 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 19, 2025

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.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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 colonialism.
- The plan outlines work each ministry in government is doing over five years to implement the UN Declaration between 2022 and 2027.
- Ministry of Citizens' Services is the lead for three of the actions in the Declaration Act Action Plan.

1) Action 3.14 to 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.

- o We are supporting the establishment of a First Nations-governed and mandated regional data governance centre in alignment with the First Nations Data Governance Strategy; and

2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- o Working collaboratively with Indigenous partners by establishing an Indigenous data advisory group.

2) Action 3.15 to adopt an inclusive digital font that allows for Indigenous languages to be included in communication, signage, services, and official records.

- o Changing or downloading a font that can recognize Indigenous language characters is one small step in the process to include Indigenous languages in our systems and services.
- o In March 2023, the Ministry of Health began issuing birth certificates with Indigenous language names.
- o However, there are over 1,200 technology systems and programs across government that need updating.
- o In early 2024, the Indigenous Languages Technology Standard was 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.
- o Because of the scope of the work, we're working closely with Indigenous partners to prioritize the work and to make sure we proceed in a way that continues to support people's access to services.
- o We're looking at an interim dual language approach, which will work with systems that can accept Indigenous language characters and systems that can't.

2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- o By 2027, we our goal is 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.

3) Action 4.36 to ensure every First Nations community in B.C. has high-speed internet services.

- o Connectivity is essential to addressing the fundamental rights and needs of First Nations and communities. In 2022, the provincial and federal governments announced a funding partnership that is supporting the expansion of internet services to the remaining underserved First Nations reserves by 2027.
- o In 2017, 66 percent of households on First Nation reserves had access to high-speed internet services. That figure is now 83 percent and will grow to 96 percent when current projects in progress are completed.
- o 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.
- o This fulfils a critical recommendation from the Highway of Tears Symposium Report's 33 recommendations aimed at enhancing safety for Indigenous women and girls.
- o Construction started on the cellular build at the end of 2021 and is due to complete later this year.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The action plan does not include all initiatives to advance reconciliation in British Columbia. 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.

Connected Coast

- Connected Coast is an innovative project that is designed to bring high-speed internet capacity to 97 B.C. rural and remote communities, including 37 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 parts of Vancouver Island.
- As of December 2024, the transport build is 85 percent complete with 121 landing sites built and over 2,810 km of submarine cable laid.
- The project is slated for completion in 2025.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Data Plan

- The Provincial Data Plan (the 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:
 - o Advance equity,
 - o Support reconciliation,
 - o Increase evidence-based decision making,
 - o Deliver the modern services people need, and
 - o Strengthen data competency and governance.
- Reliable, timely data is needed to understand and identify workable solutions to big issues in B.C. like homelessness, identifying systemic racism and other barriers, 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.

Data Standards

- 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 the systemic racism, and from those insights we will 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 supporting reconciliation.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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 and other racialized people.
- The legislation was informed by the thoughts of more than 13,000 people in B.C. 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 alignment with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.
- The implementation of the legislation is informed by Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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 is made up of eleven members that represent a wide cross-section of racialized communities and geographic regions of B.C.
- Anti-racism research priorities for 2023-2025 and process commitments related to how this research will be done were developed in collaboration with the Anti-Racism Data Committee and Indigenous Peoples. We are now working towards setting priorities for 2025-2027.
- The Province conducted the BC Demographic Survey between June to October 2023 which garnered more than 200,000 responses to help identify systemic gaps in service delivery. This data will provide the basis for the Anti-Racism Act from the Attorney General to implement mitigation strategies to increase racial equity.
- The research priorities help ensure that the Province is focused on the areas that matter most to Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities.
- In two years, we have completed research projects in three priority areas (education, health, and racial diversity in the BC Public Service). Some of the findings from this research were released in May 2024, and other findings will be published in May 2025. We

2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

continue to support research in priority areas. Through this research, we will gain valuable insight into systemic racism, and from those insights improve programs and services for all people in B.C.

- Indigenous Peoples are working with us to co-develop a new data standard to be published in 2025. This data standard will provide a consistent way of asking about Indigenous identity.
- This data standard also responds to a research priority set by Indigenous Peoples.
- As we continue working on research priorities, we are learning what data standards and directives are needed to do this work safely.
- To help mitigate harm, we have developed a mandatory 'Anti-racism in Research' training for researchers doing anti-racism research in the Data Innovation Program. Sixty-six government and external researchers have completed the training to date.
- Before June 1, 2025, we will provide our annual release of statistics and other information related to systemic racism and racial equity.
- In 2025, the release will include the 2025-2027 list of research priorities and statistics related to some of the current research priorities.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

If asked about how we are consulting Indigenous communities:

- The Anti-Racism Data Act (the Act) was the first piece of B.C. legislation to be co-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 partners We are working with Indigenous Peoples to set priorities for 2025-2027.
- We will continue to work in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples on the release of statistics and other information in 2025.
- 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. There have been five meetings so far in 2024/2025.
- The BCDS is working with Indigenous Peoples on a data standard respecting Indigenous identity. The standard will support a consistent 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 FNLC to support their creation of a First Nations-led Regional Information Governance Centre. We are supporting this work under the Declaration Act Action Plan and as one of the 2023-2025 research priorities set by Indigenous Peoples.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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. After seeking the input and advice of Indigenous partners, an Indigenous Procurement Initiative External Advisory Committee (EAC) was formed in late 2022, including representation from First Nations, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities, organizations, and businesses.
- The EAC provides advice and recommendations to the Province on increasing Indigenous Peoples' participation in provincial procurement opportunities.
- In partnership with the Province, the EAC is co-developing an action plan to:
 - o Support government's commitment to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.
 - o Implement a coordinated, cross-government approach to procurement with Indigenous Peoples.
 - o 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.
- In December 2024, all corporate solicitation templates were updated to meet accessibility standards, to streamline and clarify instructions, and to add new instructions to include the new Indigenous Languages Technology Standard for Information Management/Information Technology contracts.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: CITZ Support for Response to Forest Fires

Revised: Date of last revision, February 25, 2025

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 wildfires.
- Before, during and after an emergency, my ministry could be called upon to provide expertise and/or policy direction regarding:
 - Management of the Province's real estate portfolio (excluding schools, post-secondary, and hospitals).
 - Government service delivery to people in B.C. through Service BC.
 - Business and personal property registries services.
 - Identity verification services through the BC Services Card.
 - Availability of government services and information online (for example, www.gov.bc.ca).
- With a much drier winter, as anticipated, the 2024 wildfire season started much earlier than in recorded history.
- Although fire activity in 2024 was not as widespread as in 2023, it was still an impactful season with over 1.07 million hectares burned.

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- **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 and other partners, including other ministries, federal partners, and local governments.**
- **In many emergency situations, we will send the Service BC Mobile Van to shelters and central locations for people to access government services including ID printing and emergency financial supports.**
- **In addition, we work with 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 2024 wildfires, we experienced a severe drought and destructive wildfires at the same time:
 - Service BC supported over 2,700 incoming and outgoing calls and facilitated the delivery of more than 8,700 text messages to aid emergency response efforts.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The drought information, resources and response pages were viewed 70,000 times.
- The wildfire recovery resources page was viewed 3,900 times from January to July, with the highest traffic in April and May at 1,000 and 1,100 views respectively.

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 people in British Columbia?

- The Service BC Provincial Contact Centre offers telephone support in 220 languages and emergency response-related website content is also translated into multiple languages.
- For example, during 2024 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 five languages (Traditional and 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 five languages (Traditional

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

and Simplified Chinese, Punjabi, French and English).

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

Defer budget questions to the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) as they hold the budget for this work

- Budget 2024 included funding for two years to broaden support for evacuees by funding specially-trained Service BC contact centre agents who provide virtual navigation for accessing information and emergency services.
- Other Service BC staff were deployed directly to Reception Centres, supporting evacuees from impacted communities, where they facilitated access to emergency funding distribution.
- In situations where people cannot access a Service BC centre due to a natural disaster or extreme weather event, Mobile Service can be set up to support people by providing access to government services.
- Budget 2024 included funding for an additional Service BC Mobile Van to provide some government services, including identification verification needed for emergency support services.
- Service BC has 65 in-person service centres across the province and the BC Services Card App, all to help expedite access to disaster funding for evacuees via the Evacuee Registration and Assistance program.

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- The ministry has also worked with EMCR 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 government on how to manage web content during an emergency to ensure it is responsive.
- Citizen-facing emergency response phone lines and online information will always be available during an emergency.
- We continue to assist EMCR with their [Disaster Financial Assistance Portal](#), enabling applicants to log in and receive financial assistance to restore uninsurable losses essential to their home, livelihood, or community services.

4) Are there lessons learned or post-mortem planning around bringing ministries and partners together on the 2024 wildfires?

- My ministry is working with the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) to discuss future needs, including ensuring people get 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 (for example, 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

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

physically. To prevent further damage, controlled shutdowns of the building systems may be initiated.

- For example, this process was followed when the atmospheric river event flooded the Plant and Animal Health Centre in late 2021. Also, generators were used to restore critical power (laboratory, coolers, and freezers) and pumps were brought in to maintain and prevent extended flooding.

6) In 2024, how did the Ministry provide Information Technology (IT) support in the Province's response to mass wildfires?

- The Office of the Chief Information Officer activated the Information Technology Operations Centre (ITOC), which co-ordinates 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 to ensure their needs were addressed as the highest priority.
- Emergency response tools can include cellular and satellite Wi-Fi connectivity for front line service providers to tabletop device charging hubs and cables for people displaced and in need.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

7) Was the Mobile Van deployed for the 2024 wildfires?

- The mobile van was available for the 2024 fire season but was not required/deployed.

Contact:

Holly Cairns	Assistant Deputy Minister and Executive Financial Officer	Corporate Services	Government Financial Information
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2025/26 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, January 9, 2025

Connectivity in BC

Status of connectivity as of January 2025

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 underserved households in B.C.
- There are now approximately 88,300 underserved households.
- These figures mark important progress toward meeting the goal of connecting all households in B.C. to high-speed internet services.
- Figures below show the status of broadband connectivity and how the government is tracking towards 100 percent of households served with high-speed internet services. They are based on analysis of data from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and the Connectivity Division.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Based on updates from internet service providers, the federal government determined that 13,000 rural households that had been considered served are actually underserved. This has impacted the remaining homes metrics.

	Total households in B.C.	Rural households (includes households on rural First Nations reserves)	Households on First Nation reserves
Total	2,211,694	319,210	39,577
# Served	2,123,365	236,123	32,793
% Served	96.0%	74.0%	82.9%
# Currently underserved	88,328	83,087	6,785
# In progress*	49,205	47,857	5,301
% In progress*	2.20%	15.00%	13.40%
# Remaining underserved when current projects complete**	39,123	35,230	1,484
% Remaining underserved when current projects complete**	1.8%	11.0%	3.7%

*In progress means there is a project selected or in progress for these households. Number of households in progress can change (+/-) until each project is complete and a final count is confirmed.

**The estimated remaining underserved 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 percent, is without cellular coverage.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The figures below remain unchanged as service providers are required to submit project updates to the federal government regarding private cellular expansion. As this data becomes available from the federal government, the overall number of kilometres served will reflect progress in B.C.

	2019	2025
Total km of primary and secondary highways	15,000 km	15,000 km
# Highway km with cellular service*	8,900 km	10,200 km
% Highway km with cellular service	59%	68%

*As reported by service providers to the federal government.

Connectivity program update (as of January 2025)

Since 2017:

- 217 projects approved (including 7 regional connectivity plans):
 - 72 projects are co-funded with the federal government
 - 88 projects are in progress
 - 129 projects are complete

Households and communities benefiting:

- Over 93,000 households to be connected from all projects when complete.

Other benefits:

- 440 km of highway cellular, including 252 km and two rest areas along Highway 16 (Highway of Tears).
- 28 highway rest areas, ferry terminals and campgrounds with improved connectivity including cellular coverage and/or Wi-Fi.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Five emergency call boxes.

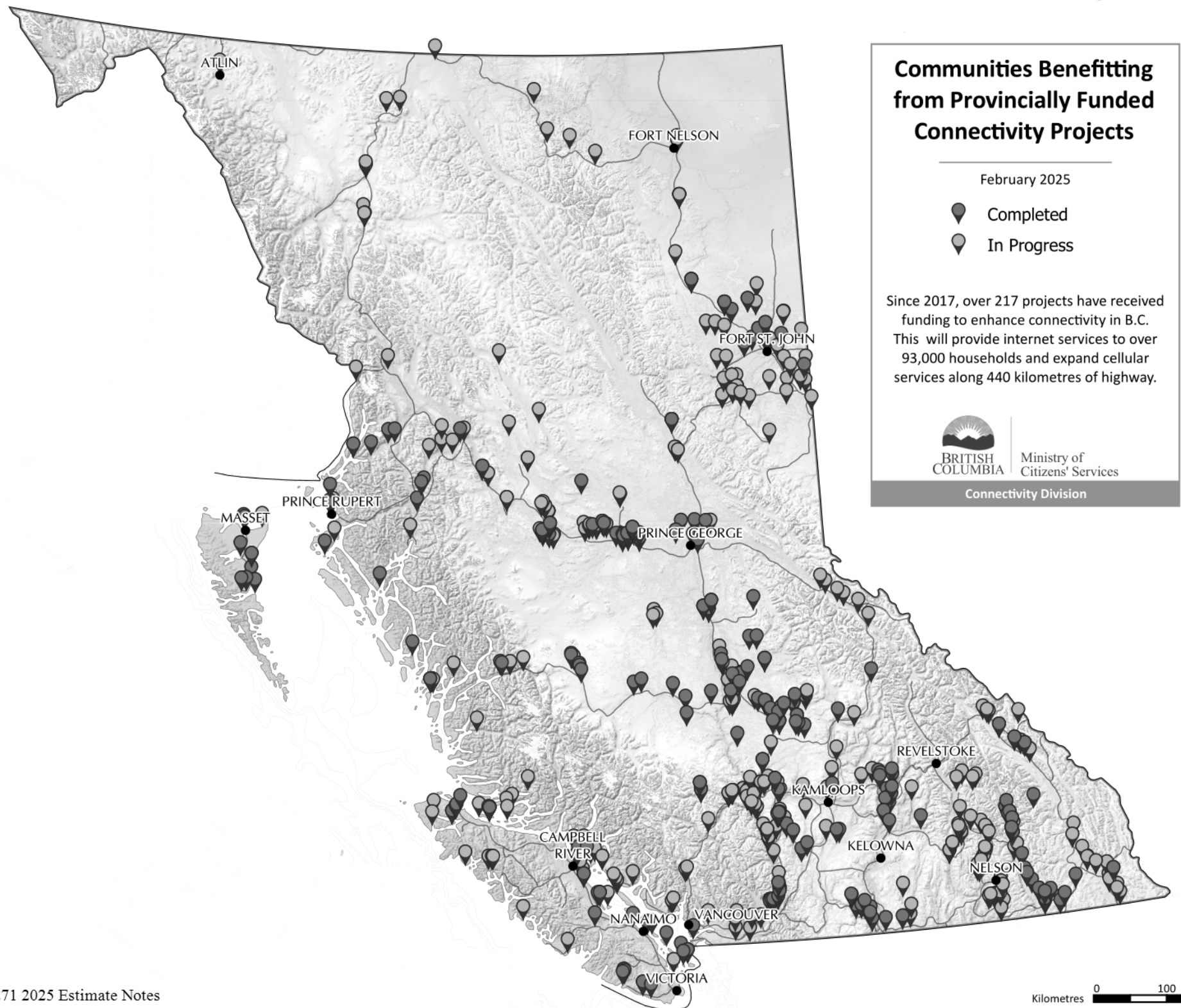
List of cellular projects:

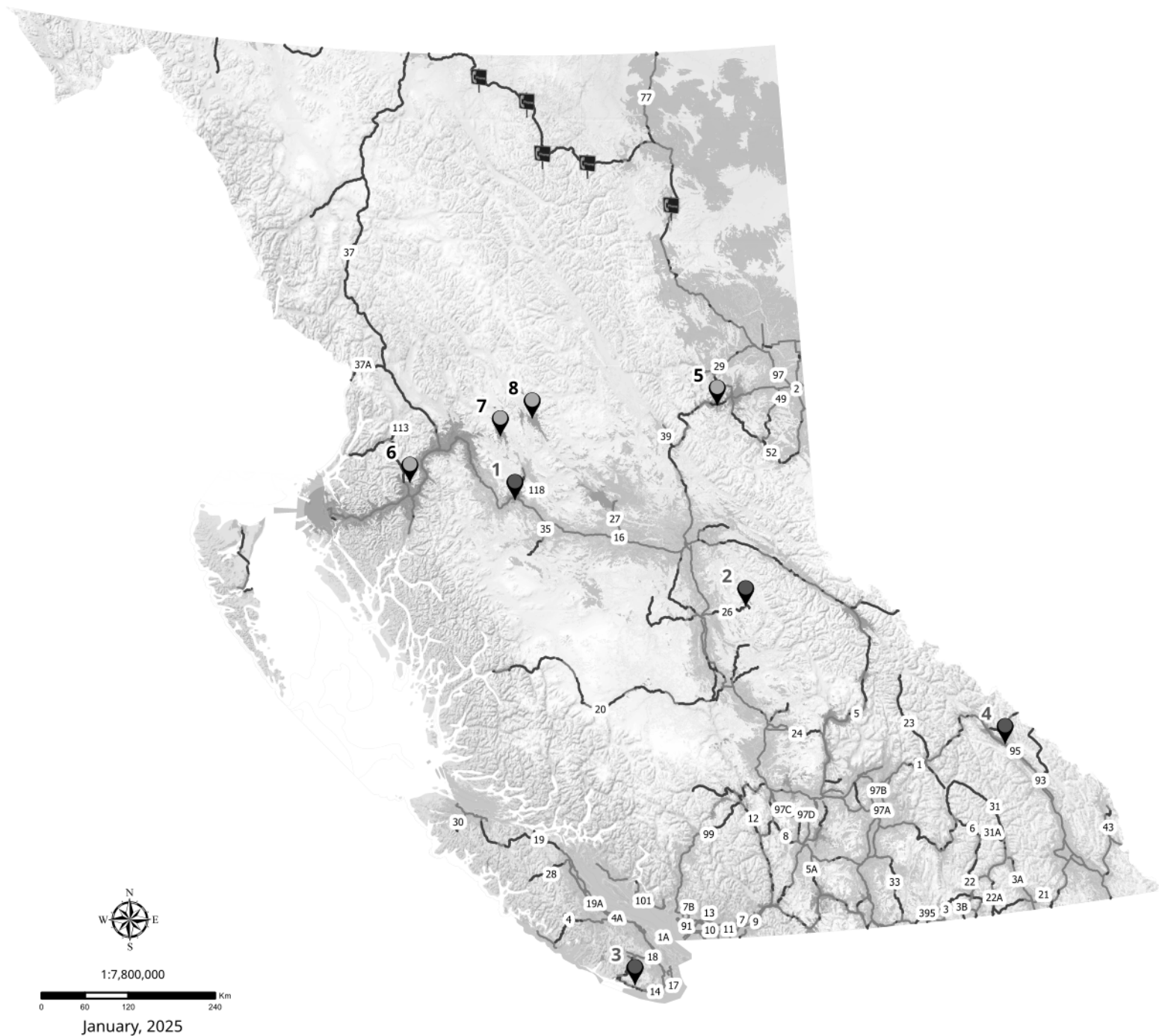
	Applicant	Rest area	Total	Status
Perow, Highway 16 (Yellowhead Highway)	TELUS	0	8 km	Complete
Wells, Highway 26 (Barkerville Highway)	TELUS	1	6 km	Complete
Highway 14 - Sooke to Port Renfrew	Rogers	1	70 km	Complete
Emergency call boxes on Highway 97	Northern Rockies Regional Municipality	0	5 call boxes	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
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 Executive Director Connectivity Division 250-516-3848

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Legend

Provincially Funded Projects - Status

 Complete

 In Progress

 Callboxes

 Highways without Coverage

 Highways with Cellular Coverage

 or Pending Coverage

	Provincial Government Funded Projects	Applicant	Rest Area	Total	Status
1	Perow, Highway 16 (Yellowhead Hwy)	Telus	0	8 km	Complete
2	Wells, Highway 26 (Barkerville Hwy)	Telus	1	6 km	Complete
3	Highway 14 (Sooke to Port Renfrew)	Rogers	1	70 km	Complete
4	Highway 95 (Golden to Spillimacheen1)	Rogers	1	25 km	Complete
5	Highway 97 (Pine Pass)	Rogers	0	69 km	In progress
6	Highway 16 (Prince Rupert to Witset)	Rogers	2	252 km	In progress
7	Babine 6 (Lake Babine Nation)	Telus	0	6 km	In progress
8	North Takla Lake 7 (Takla Nation)	Telus	0	5 km	In progress
	Emergency call boxes on Highway 97	Northern Rockies Regional Municipality	0	5 call boxes	Complete
Total amount of highway covered by funded cellular projects:				440 km	



Ministry of
Citizens' Services

**BC Highways
Cellular Coverage**

2025/26 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, January 20, 2025

Key Messages:

- Bridging the digital divide is part of British Columbia's Declaration Act and our commitment to reconciliation and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- The Province's commitment to connect all First Nations communities to high-speed internet is action 4.36 of the Declaration Act Action Plan.
- Access to reliable high-speed internet and cellular connectivity is more important than ever.
- 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.
- The ministry works with all levels of government, including First Nations and First Nation organizations to collaborate and support projects and to provide funding to expand connectivity to areas that are underserved in First Nation reserves and Modern Treaty Nation lands.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- **Working together with First Nations, internet service providers and other organizations, we're seeing steady progress.**
- **In 2017, 66 percent of households on First Nation reserves had access to high-speed internet services. That figure is now approximately 83 percent with an additional 13 percent to be connected when projects in progress are completed.**
- **With record investments we are making in connectivity, this number will continue to grow until all communities have access to high-speed internet.**

Questions and Answers:

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

- We estimate 17 percent of households on First Nation reserves do not have access to high-speed internet today.
- When all current provincially funded projects are complete, this figure will drop to approximately 3.7 percent, or just over 1,400 households on First Nation reserves that still require a project to have access to high-speed internet services.

2) What has been the progress to date?

- Connectivity funding has supported many Indigenous communities to achieve their connectivity goals. In 2017, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

estimated 66 percent 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 83 percent of First Nations households on reserve with access to high-speed internet services. When current projects are completed, that number will grow to 96 percent.
- For example, the \$45 million Connected Coast project (funded 25 percent by the province and 75 percent by the federal government) is designed to bring high-speed internet capacity capability to 97 rural and remote communities, including 37 Indigenous communities.
- To date, there have been six Connected Communities BC funding program intakes that have focused on underserved areas of the province. The program continues to accept applications and is open to any First Nations-led or supported project in any area in the province.
- 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 be completed this year with the provincial and federal governments both contributing \$2.25 million, for a total of \$4.5 million towards a total project estimated cost of just over \$11 million.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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 Nation 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.

5) When will the Highway 16 cellular expansion project be completed?

- Closing cellular gaps along Highway 16 was a recommendation in the Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report.
- As of January 2025, Rogers Communications has built and activated 9 of the 11 cell towers and are establishing services along 166 kilometres where wireless gaps along the route

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

previously existed. The remaining towers are scheduled for completion in 2025.

- When the project is complete, Rogers Communications will provide 252 kilometres of new cellular coverage along Highway 16, closing gaps to ensure continuous coverage along the entire 720-kilometre corridor.
- This will establish a safer environment for travel, and fulfil one of the recommendations in the 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report to enhance safety for Indigenous women and girls.

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2025/26 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, January 8, 2025

Key Messages:

- Cellular connectivity along highways is critical for public safety and access to emergency services – especially along rural and remote stretches.
- The Province has allocated \$90 million, including the \$75 million that was announced in Supplementary Estimates 2022/23, towards expanding cellular coverage.
- The funds are administered through Northern Development Initiative Trust and to date have supported expanding cellular services to approximately 440 km of highway, 28 rest stops, ferry terminals and campgrounds.
 - This includes a Rogers Communications project for cellular coverage expansion for 252 km and two rest areas along Highway 16 in northern B.C.
 - It also includes provincial funding of approximately \$4.9 million that supported the installation of seven new cellular towers along Highway 14 on Vancouver Island, bringing cellular coverage to over 70 kms of highway between Sooke and Port Renfrew.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- **The Province is closely monitoring all technologies that could increase connectivity along underserved highways in the future, including advancements in satellite-to-cellular technology.**

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 percent) 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 to not only build but operate and maintain.

2) Why did the reporting for the number of kms of expanded cellular along highways go down from 532 km in 2024 to 440 km in 2025?

- The number of kms was adjusted to reflect Rogers Communications withdrawal of a highway cellular project on Highway 3 from Hope to Keremeos.
- The Province cannot direct service providers as to where and when they expand their networks, however we are in regular dialogue with service providers regarding overcoming the gaps in cellular services along highways.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The Province is aware of other projects outside of provincial funding that are expected to increase cellular coverage. For example, Rogers Communications has announced projects for Highway 16 on Haida Gwaii and Highway 4 on Vancouver Island. When these projects are completed, the related coverage data becomes available from the federal government, and the overall number of kms served will reflect progress in B.C.

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

- Expanding cellular along unpopulated sections of highway without available electric power is particularly challenging.
- Projects that provide points of connectivity, such as emergency call boxes, are eligible for funding through the Cellular Expansion Fund administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT).
- Communities and Regional Districts interested in deploying emergency call boxes or Wi-Fi at rest stops in their regions can reach out to NDIT directly.
- The Province is closely monitoring advancements in satellite-to-cellular technology that could increase connectivity along underserved highways, including those with no power.

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

- Roadside emergency call boxes – an emergency telephone service – have been installed along the Alaska Highway where cell

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

coverage is currently unavailable due to a lack of power. This will provide critical access to 911 services on this route.

- Wi-Fi at rest stops or emergency call boxes can support spot connectivity along highway routes. These solutions are available for funding through the Cellular Expansion Fund through the Northern Development Initiative Trust.

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

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

6) Is the Cellular Expansion Fund part of the Connecting Communities BC program?

- No, the funding has been provided to the Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) to administer 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

7) When will the Highway 16 cellular expansion project be completed?

- The provincial and federal governments are supporting a Rogers Communications project to provide 252 km of continuous cellular coverage between Prince Rupert and Smithers on Highway 16 – the Highway of Tears.
- As of December 2024, Rogers Communications has built and activated 9 of the 11 cell towers covering 200 km and are provisioning services where cellular gaps previously existed.
- The two remaining towers are expected to be completed in 2025.
- Once TELUS negotiates roaming services on the new Rogers Communications towers, TELUS customers will also be able to benefit from the expanded cellular connectivity on the route.
- Closing cellular gaps along Highway 16 was a recommendation in the Highway of Tears Symposium Report. 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.

8) Why is the Highway 16 cellular expansion project taking so long?

- The cellular build on Highway 16 encountered several delays outside the control of Rogers Communications.

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- For example, multiple mountaintop sites required military grade helicopters to deploy equipment that had to be used to fight fires during critical build seasons.
- The Province is grateful that Rogers Communications has followed through with the project and plans to complete the build and provide services along the remaining sections of the Highway of Tears.

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

- Everyone in B.C. should be able to call emergency services when they need to.
- Telecommunications companies in Canada are regulated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission; 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.
- In 2022, the Federal Minister for Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada announced that the 13 largest telecommunication companies in Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure and guarantee emergency roaming, mutual assistance, and a communications protocol for advising the public and governments during major outages and other emergencies.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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:

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2025/26 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, January 13, 2025

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 underserved 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.**
- **The program has completed five intakes so far and will run subsequent intakes until program objectives have been met. The sixth intake will remain open until June 2025.**
- **The program funds applicants to build connectivity infrastructure, using multiple technologies – for example, fibre, cable, and fixed wireless.**

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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 – the government's plan for investing in rural communities to create inclusive growth.
- It is reflected as 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 an estimated 39,000 households still require a connectivity project to deliver high-speed internet services.

2. Why has the number of households underserved or without a project pending gone up since 2024? Isn't the Province making progress on its mandate to connect all homes by 2027?

- The Province continues to make progress on the 2027 commitment, however there are several reasons why reported project numbers fluctuate year over year.
- The number of households in progress can change (+/-) until each project is completed and the final household count is confirmed.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- While program funding continues to show progress connecting homes in B.C., population growth, population distribution and changes in data reported by service providers can impact overall progress towards connecting 100 percent of all households.
- In 2024, there were multiple updates and changes that were outside the control of the Province:
 - Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada made the following changes to data used to gauge connectivity progress:
 - Households previously considered served or pending served were changed to underserved by almost 13,000.
 - Rogers Communications' commitment resulting from the acquisition of Shaw reduced the number of households anticipated to be connected (and previously reported) by approximately 10,000.
- In total 23,000 households previously reported as served or pending served were changed to underserved status.
- At the same time, connectivity programming moved approximately 19,000 households from underserved to either pending or served.

3. 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The program has completed five application intakes for funding.
- The program will run subsequent intakes until program objectives have been met. The sixth intake, currently open, will remain open until June 2025.
- Full details on eligibility and how to apply are on the [Connecting Communities BC](#) web pages.

4. 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.

5. 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, with several approved projects expected to be announced soon.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

6. 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 Megabits per second (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.

7. 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.
- In 2017, 92 percent of B.C. households had access to internet speeds that met the 50/10 Megabits per second (Mbps) target, the rest remaining under-served. B.C. was above the Canadian average with 57 percent of rural households and 66 percent of households on First Nation reserves being considered served.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- As of January 2025, 96 percent of households in B.C. have access to 50/10 Mbps service, including 74 percent of rural households and 83 percent of households on First Nations reserves. Once current projects are completed, 97.8 percent of all households in B.C. will have access to high-speed internet.
- The B.C. government's goal is that every household will have access to minimum internet speeds of 50/10 Mbps by 2027.

8. 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 land-based 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.

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2025/26 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, January 21, 2025

Key Messages:

- Connected Coast is an innovative project that is designed to bring high-speed internet capacity to 97 B.C. rural and remote communities, including 37 Indigenous communities.
- This subsea cable transport project involves laying fibre along the ocean floor to key landing sites to bring high-speed connectivity 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.
- This project, announced in January 2018, is funded by the Government of Canada and the province through Northern Development Initiative Trust.
- CityWest owns and operates the network infrastructure in partnership with the Strathcona Regional District via an established joint venture agreement.
- As of December 2024, the transport build is 85 percent complete with 121 landing sites built and over 2,810 km of subsea cable laid.
- The project is slated for completion in 2025.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Questions and Answers:

1) What are the core objectives of the Connected Coast project?

- To bring high-speed internet transport capacity via a subsea fibre optic network to underserved coastal communities, particularly Indigenous and remote communities lacking access to transport for sufficient internet speeds (50/10 Megabits per second).
- The project ensures open access at key landing sites through a point of presence accessible to any Internet Service Provider to provide last-mile or cellular services to the community.
- It establishes an alternate transport fibre path from Highway 16 in Prince Rupert to the Internet exchange in Vancouver, to provide connectivity resiliency to the region.

2) How many people and businesses are getting connected?

- This project is designed to bring high-speed internet capacity to 97 rural and remote communities (136 landing sites), including 37 Indigenous communities representing 31 First Nations.
- Communities with existing infrastructure 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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

- Connected Coast is a transport project which brings high-speed internet capacity from an internet exchange point in Vancouver to communities along the coast and Vancouver Island.
- For homes to access high-speed internet services, transport fibre and last-mile projects (which deliver services to the home) are both required.
- Some communities reached by the project already have the last-mile infrastructure in place. These communities will benefit from higher internet speeds once the last-mile network is connected to the Connected Coast fibre. Other communities will require 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 benefit from the Connected Coast are already underway.
- Funding is available through the Connecting Communities BC program for last-mile projects in underserved areas where no projects are currently in progress, and where last-mile infrastructure is needed to deliver high-speed services.
- For provincially and federally funded projects, any service provider can apply for open access to the network for last-mile or cellular projects.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

4) Why has the number of communities benefitting from the Connected Coast project been reduced from 159 landing sites in the original project proposal?

- Since the project was announced, there have been multiple changes to the overall design and planned landing sites.
- As the project has progressed, landing sites have been added, removed and adjusted for several reasons including feasibility of laying a subsea fibre in some sections, communities declining to support a landing site, and more efficient routing to name a few.
- While the final number of landing sites has been reduced to 136, several communities that were to benefit from the original scope of the project are no longer underserved through other service provider projects.

5) What was the result of the change order to the project in 2024?

- In June 2024, the Government of Canada, Northern Development Initiative Trust and CityWest agreed to a change request to ensure that the project will meet its objectives by 2025. The following changes were approved including:
 - Extending completion date to March 31, 2025.
 - Reducing landing sites in areas already served by existing service providers or where network design changes have altered the route, while retaining landing sites in proximity to underserved communities that require transport capacity.
 - Route changes on the west coast of Vancouver Island to support updated design and engineering plans.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- These updates ensure the project will provide enhanced connectivity to B.C.'s coastal communities while optimizing resources and maintaining the original intent of the project.

6) Connected Coast was scheduled to be complete in 2020. Why has the project been 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.
- Projects like these are complex and can take many years to complete. The project was divided into segments with construction activities, permitting and consultations progressing on different timelines.
- 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.
- The initial completion date of March 31, 2020, which was established at the time the project was approved, was extended each successive year: 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- This project is nearing completion of construction and is expected to be built by March 2025. Once complete, the project will bring high-speed internet capacity to many coastal communities for the first time.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

7) 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.
- In June 2024, the Government of Canada, Northern Development Initiative Trust and CityWest agreed to a change request to ensure that the project will meet its objectives by 2025.

8) Considering the cable breaks in the Connected Coast network, are there any safeguards in the project that will prevent network disruptions?

- 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Northern Development Initiative Trust has opened an application intake for a redundant link to Haida Gwaii.

9) What is the role of the federal government to ensure that the Connected Coast is a resilient network?

- The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is currently conducting a policy review of the CRTC Broadband Fund, including opportunities to fund projects to make networks more resilient. Public consultation concluded on June 17, 2024, leading to a possible Broadband Fund Call 4, for applications, which could potentially include resiliency, and may be available in late 2025.

Contact:

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This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 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, January 13, 2025

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 217 connectivity projects have been approved for provincial funding since 2017 (including seven regional connectivity planning projects). Of these, 88 projects are in progress, and 129 projects are complete.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- **We are making progress to connect all homes to high-speed internet services. When this funding was announced in 2022, there were 115,000 under-served households in B.C.**
- **There are now approximately 39,000 homes that still require a connectivity solution when all approved projects are complete.**
- **The program has completed five intakes so far and will run subsequent intakes until program objectives have been met. The sixth intake will remain open until June 2025.**
- **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 two positions with the Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship, to specifically focus on receiving and tracking connectivity permitting applications and ensure seamless coordination.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The ministry also works with passive infrastructure owners, including BC Hydro, for access to poles and passive infrastructure for government-funded connectivity projects.

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 the 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 across government and with service providers in the early stages of any government-funded connectivity project to identify and resolve potential challenges that could impact timelines.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The team assists service providers with facilitating the permitting process and identifying and resolving potential challenges that could impact project timelines early on.

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2025/26 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 17, 2025

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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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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 from the local government or a First Nation Council Resolution provide?

- The letter of support from the 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 underserved?

- 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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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Communities that are having challenges getting service provider support can contact ministry staff in the Connectivity Division (connectedcommunities@gov.bc.ca) 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 the Union of BC Municipalities 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 these discussions.

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 in tracking the progress of projects, the [National Broadband Internet Service Availability Map](#) now provides project

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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 ministry 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.

6) Why did the Ministry of Citizens' Services file a Part 1 Application to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) requesting changes to telecommunications data sharing?

- The purpose of the Part 1 Application was to gain direct access to broadband and mobile data that is already provided by service providers to the CRTC as part of their Annual Facilities Survey.
- While the federal government annually receives detailed data regarding the availability of broadband internet and available speeds as well as cellular coverage, this information is not shared with provinces.
- Access to this more granular data supports provincial planning for the advancement of connectivity projects throughout the province by ensuring that funding is targeted to underserved areas, and greater insights into available services where available speeds may be disputed.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

7) What was included as part of the Part 1 Application request to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission?

- Three things were requested as part of the application including:
 - A change in confidentiality restrictions to make provider information available (for example, Provider, technology, speed) at the 250m road segment level, instead of the 22 km hex level currently found on the Innovation, Science and Economic Development Internet Availability Map.
 - That the complete internet and mobile wireless service provider facilities data sets be shared with the provinces.
 - That transport data collected from service providers be shared in confidence with all provinces in Canada that have interest to receive the information.

8) Has the Province received a decision from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) regarding the Part 1 Application?

- The Province is anticipating a CRTC decision in 2025.

Contact:

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2025/26 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 8, 2025

Key Messages:

- The Province recognizes affordability of internet services can be a barrier for those with low incomes.
- Telecommunications in Canada, including service providers, are regulated by the federal Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.
- The federal government promotes affordability by encouraging competition where possible. 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 with affordable high-speed home internet plans.
- Rogers Communications, TELUS and NorthwTel are participating service providers in B.C. and offer internet plans as low as \$10 to \$25 a month.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Questions and Answers:

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

- No. According to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Communications Market Report (November 2024), prices in B.C. are less than the Canadian average price for a 50/10 Megabits per second (Mbps) service at \$72 a month (average is \$74). 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 three service providers in B.C., including Rogers Communications, TELUS and NorthWestel, that offer 200 gigabytes (GB) of data usage starting at \$20 a month with no equipment or installation fees as part of the federal Connecting Families Initiative.
- In addition, TELUS and Rogers Communications have expanded their own low-cost internet service plans to reach additional groups beyond those eligible under 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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.

4) What is the role of the federal government regarding low-cost internet plans?

- Telecommunications policy is led by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and telecommunications service providers are regulated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).
- The CRTC and federal government promote internet and cellular service affordability by increasing competition between service providers.
- Evidence of this in B.C. was the provision for Videotron, a Quebec-based cellular services company, to acquire Shaw's Freedom Mobile. Videotron and their Fizz branded service are currently available in B.C. at competitive rates.
- In addition to increasing competition, the federal government introduced the Connecting Families Initiative internet affordability program which is a voluntary program for participating service providers to offer low-cost plans for low-income seniors and families.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

5) Is there an affordability program for low-earth orbit (LEO) satellite services?

- LEO service providers like Starlink do not participate in individual countries' programs.
- Adoption of Starlink to date has been by individuals that can afford the ongoing monthly costs.

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This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: Facts and Figures – Digital Data

Revised: Date of last revision, January 10, 2025

Cybersecurity

Security Awareness

- Government initiated the CyberBC pilot program in 2023, to promote cyber education and awareness and to increase cybersecurity capacity across B.C.'s broader public sector.
- In 2024, a series of self-serve cybersecurity resources, foundational frameworks, and a refreshed Corporate Supply Arrangement for Security Services were launched to help all 2,400 public sector organizations access skilled security resources.
- In addition to the \$24 million that Government spends annually on its internal cybersecurity team, in Budget 2022, Government invested \$50.8 million over three years to improve our ability to prevent, detect and respond to cyberattacks on government systems and ensure the protection of government-held data.
- In the last three years, the number of daily unauthorized access attempts on the B.C. Government has grown four-fold, from 372 million to 1.5 billion.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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

BC Data Catalogue expands

- The BC Data catalogue now has 3,254 discoverable data sets that are available to the public with an additional 144 datasets available only to government users.
- The BC Data Catalogue provides access to data from 22 ministries and more than 27 public bodies.

New Data Standards and Plans created

- Launched in November 2023, the Provincial Data Plan is an all-of-government approach to use data to meet objectives to advance equity, support reconciliation, increase evidence-based decision making, deliver modern services people need, and strengthen our data competency and governance.
- A new Gender and Sex Data Standard was launched January 2023 that establishes consistent gender and sex terminology, and guidance to ministries on the collection of gender and sex data that recognizes gender diversity, minimizes harm, and meets requirements under the BC Human Rights Code.
- Under the Anti-Racism Data Act, BC Data Service Division (BCDS) is developing two new data standards: one regarding Indigenous identity and a second on racial identity. BCDS is working with Indigenous Peoples, the Anti-Racism Data Committee, and other partners such as the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner and Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, to co-develop these standards.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services

Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- These standards are expected to be published in 2025 and will ensure Government is collecting consistent and culturally safe information that accurately reflects the identities of people in B.C.
- Under B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Action Plan, Action 3.15, an Indigenous Language Technology Standard and Guidelines were released in early in 2024. 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

- The B.C. Data Innovation Program currently has 26 active projects, including 19 ministry projects and seven academic projects.
- Forty-nine datasets have been made available by various ministries and public bodies to support research across government and academia through the BC Data Innovation Program.
- A recent study linked multiple administrative datasets for Government to better understand homelessness in B.C. The research provides estimates on the size of the homeless cohort, demographic information, and geospatial summaries into the location and movement of this population. The datasets are currently being used by three ministries to improve services.

Driving innovation and economic recovery

Better access to data and digital business opportunities

- To date, Government has made 224 procurement opportunities valued at a total of almost \$57 million available to tech companies of all sizes through the Digital Marketplace.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The Digital Marketplace continues to be an accessible way for more diverse businesses to provide their professional services to the province. Twenty-one procurements were completed in 2024. Fourteen of 21 were new vendor partners and 17 of 21 were small or medium-sized businesses.

Digital transformation and improved service delivery

- Thirty-nine 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 a few days rather than months or years using B.C. government's private cloud platform. This platform now hosts 467 applications supporting programs and services across the B.C. government.
- Government's critical cloud applications include Wildfire Predictive Services, Drive BC and Emergency Support Services.

Managing government's technology investments

Digital Investment Portfolio

- Government allocates \$110 million in capital annually to digital activities. In 2024/2025, this funding supported close to 100 distinct projects.
- For 2024/2025, the portfolio's objectives were to invest in projects that help make B.C. government services inclusive, reliable, easy to use and responsive to people's modern expectations.
- These investments help support many of government's key services.

2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services

Minister Responsible: Hon. George Chow

- For example, investments in the Building Permit Hub, a digital tool that will help to streamline and standardize local government building permitting processes to improve the delivery of new homes. The government heard from industry that incomplete applications, inconsistent submission requirements and different BC Building Code interpretations are some of the biggest challenges with the building permit submission process.

Contacts:

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2025/26 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 9, 2025

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 racialized people.
- The Anti-Racism Data Act (the Act) became law in June 2022 and 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 Indigenous identity to identify and eliminate systemic racism.
- With this information, the Province can identify where there are systemic barriers and improve access to government programs and services for Indigenous and racialized people.
- The implementation of the legislation is informed by Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee (the Committee).

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

If asked about what action has been taken since the Act came into effect:

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

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Questions and Answers:

1) Have you developed a data standard?

- The Ministry of Citizens' Services is working with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee to develop a data standard regarding Indigenous identity and a data standard regarding racial identity.
- These standards are expected to be published in 2025 and will ensure Government is collecting consistent and culturally safe information that accurately reflects the identities of people in B.C.
- The distinction-based data standard regarding Indigenous identity is also responsive to a 2023-2025 research priority set by Indigenous Peoples.

2) How are you working with Indigenous Peoples?

- The Anti-Racism Data Act (the Act) was developed with Indigenous Peoples and we continue to work together on all data initiatives under the Act.
- We are currently consulting with Indigenous partners on two new data standards being developed under the Act.
- Every two years we consult with Indigenous Peoples to set research priorities, and we consult annually regarding the release of statistics under the Act.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- As a relational supplement to consultation activities, we hold monthly meetings with representatives of Indigenous Governing Entities to discuss Indigenous data governance and engage on the implementation of the Act. Nineteen meetings have been held since 2022.
- The Ministry of Citizens' Services also 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 Anti-Racism Data Act.
- We are working closely with FNLC to support the creation of a First Nations-led Regional Information Governance Centre. We are supporting this work under the Declaration Act Action plan and as one of the 2023-2025 research priorities set by Indigenous Peoples.

3) Why was the Anti-Racism Data Act (the Act) needed?

- Most ministries do not 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.
- 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 these services.
- The B.C. Human Rights Commissioner, the B.C. Representative for Children and Youth, as well as B.C.'s Multicultural Advisory

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Council, all called for disaggregated demographic data to better understand systemic racism and inequity in B.C.

- The Act enables the collection and use of personal information for the purposes of identifying systemic racism. It also commits Government to develop data standards and data directives that ensure that demographic data is collected and used in a culturally safe way that mitigates community harms.
- With this information, we can identify where systemic racism is taking place and improve how programs and services are delivered to people across the province.

4) How has the Anti-Racism Data Act (the Act) been implemented since the legislation was introduced in June 2022?

- The Anti-Racism Data Committee (the Committee) was established in September 2022 and has held 18 meetings and three community events. The Committee is made up of 11 members who are experts in their respective fields including academia, business, and advocacy and also represent a wide cross-section of racialized communities and geographic regions of B.C.
- Anti-racism research priorities for 2023-2025 were developed in collaboration with the Committee and in consultation with Indigenous Peoples and published in late May 2023.
- The 2025-2027 research priorities will be published on or before June 1, 2025.

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- The research priorities help ensure that the Province is focused on areas that matter most to Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities.
- We have gained valuable insight into the impact of systemic racism on people in the province.
- In May 2023, we published a report on our progress implementing the Act between June 2022 and May 2023.
- In May 2024, we published research reports from three of the 2023-2025 research priorities. The topics were:
 - Health conditions across diverse populations in B.C.,
 - Accessing learning supports in B.C.'s K-12 system, and
 - Racial diversity in the BC Public Service.
- We also published a report on our progress implementing the Act between June 2023 and May 2024, updates from the Committee and details about the BC Demographic Survey.
- In 2025, we will publish additional research related to some of the 2023-2025 research priorities, and as research continues, we'll be able to turn insights into actions and improve programs and services for all people in B.C. These insights will be used by the Provincial Committee on Anti-Racism to inform an action plan for addressing systemic racism under the Anti-Racism Act (the Act).

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Under the Act, BC Data Service (BCDS) is developing two new data standards: one regarding Indigenous identity and a second on racial identity.
- BCDS is working with Indigenous Peoples, collaborating with the Committee, and consulting with other partners such as the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner and Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, to develop these standards.
- The Indigenous identity data standard is also responsive to a research priority set by Indigenous Peoples.
- Both standards are expected to be published in 2025.

5) 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 Anti-Racism Data Act (the Act), every two years, the Province is required to determine research priorities to help guide government's approach to identifying and addressing systemic racism.
- Research priorities are developed in consultation with Indigenous Peoples, as well as in collaboration with the Anti-Racism Data Committee (the Committee).
- The first priorities were released in May 2023.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 2023-2025 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.
 - 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.
- 2023-2025 research priorities developed with Indigenous Peoples include:
 - Health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples to understand experiences from an intersectional and holistic perspective.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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.
- Indigenous Peoples prioritized taking a distinctions-based approach to research and continuing to advance our commitment to Indigenous data sovereignty.
- While these 2023-2025 research priorities focus on specific sectors or programs, the Province will continue to address systemic racism in all government programs and services.
- Government will be setting 2025-2027 research priorities by June 1, 2025, and is currently consulting with Indigenous Peoples and collaborating with the Committee to develop them.
- Insights from both sets of research priorities will be used by the Provincial Committee on Anti-Racism to inform an action plan for addressing systemic racism under the Anti-Racism Act.

6) What is a data standard, and what data standards are being developed?

- Data standards under the Anti-Racism Data Act (the Act) sets out the categories of pre-determined types of personal information that may be collected, used and shared by public bodies to identify and eliminate systemic racism and advance racial equity.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- BC Data Service is developing two data standards under the Act in collaboration with the Anti-Racism Data Committee and Indigenous Peoples, the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.
- The Racial Identity Data Standard will give public bodies a consistent and culturally safe way of asking people about their racial identity.
- The Indigenous Identity Data Standard will bring consistency and a distinctions-based approach to the way that public bodies collect identity information from Indigenous people.
- The data standards will be accompanied by guidance for public bodies to ensure that data is collected, used and shared in a culturally safe way.
- The data standards will also support a coordinated approach for ongoing collection of demographic information across government.
- The continued collection of demographic information, particularly data about racial identity and Indigenous identity, is important for research on systemic racism and improving government programs and services.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Race-Based Data Use

7) How will racialized communities be protected from harm?

- We know that collecting race-based data must be done with great care to avoid harm and bias, while maximizing the power of data to drive much needed systemic change.
- That's why we consulted with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism Data Committee (the Committee), as well as seeking guidance from the B.C. Human Rights Commissioner and Information and Privacy Commissioner, to identify and address any potential for harm in our work.
- The BC Data Service (BCDS) has developed 'Anti-Racism in Research' training for researchers working on 2023-2025 research priorities or wanting to do anti-racism research in the Data Innovation Program data. The training includes guidance on cultural safety and mitigation of community harm in research.
- The training is one part of broader anti-racism governance that BCDS developed for researchers who want to do anti-racism research in the Data Innovation Program.
- The Committee reviewed anti-racism research findings under the Anti-Racism Data Act prior to their release in 2024 to prevent community harms. They will also review the findings that will be released in 2025.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

8) Who is going to hold Government accountable through this work?

- The Anti-Racism Data Committee (the Committee) helps us to centre the voices of Indigenous and racialized peoples in this work and to help mitigate potential harm to communities.
- The Anti-Racism Data Act (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.
- Research Priorities are developed in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and the Committee and published every two years, as a way for the public to hold Government accountable for making progress on the areas that matter most to Indigenous and racialized people.
- In 2024, Government enacted the Act, which requires Government to take action on systemic racism uncovered through data collection and to provide supports to those who have been negatively impacted.

9) Why does Government need demographic information about race?

- 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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 these services.
- The collection of demographic information, particularly data about racial identity and Indigenous identity, is crucial to research on systemic racism and can help government identify gaps in programs and deliver stronger public services for everyone in B.C.

10) Advocates have been calling for government to address systemic racism for years. Why 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 (the 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- We know that we won't be successful if we don't move at a pace that is trusted by Indigenous and racialized people.

11) How is the Attorney General's Anti-Racism Act different from the Anti-Racism Data Act?

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

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This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 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 23, 2025

Key Messages:

- BC Stats produces population projections to help understand changes in growth levels based on region so that the Province and local governments can plan and build programs, policies and services to address people's needs.
- In the last two years, B.C. experienced its largest population growth since the early 1990s. Between July 2022 and July 2024, the population of B.C. increased by 341,000 people, an average increase of 3.1 percent per year, reaching 5.7 million people in July 2024.
- The increase in population was entirely driven by international migration, with B.C. receiving 353,000 international migrants between 2022 and 2024. This is the largest level of international migration on record.
- However, B.C.'s population is expected to remain the same over the next two years.
- Given the federal government's recent policy changes, BC Stats projects that B.C.'s population will remain at 5.7 million between 2025 and 2027.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- For long-term estimates, BC Stats projects the population of B.C. to increase from 5.7 million people in 2024 to 6.8 million in 2046.
- International migration is expected to be the most significant driver of population change for the foreseeable future as B.C. faces an ageing population and historically low birth rates.
- For the first time in recorded history, deaths in B.C. outnumbered births in 2021, leading to a negative natural population change.
- B.C.'s natural population change has been in steady decline since 2009. The annual number of births in B.C. has been relatively stable at 40,000 to 45,000 since 2000; however, the annual number of deaths 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. has experienced a significant population increase over the last two years. B.C.'s population grew by 341,000 during this period, representing an average annual growth rate of 3.1 percent, 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 two years,

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Canada's population has grown by 2.4 million, with an average growth of 3.0 percent annually. This is by far the highest growth rate among the G7 nations and puts Canada among the top 20 fastest-growing countries in the world during this period.

- BC Stats projects that population growth in B.C. (and Canada) is expected to stall over the next few years as the federal government aims to significantly reduce international migration to Canada. As such, the population of B.C. is expected to remain stable at 5.7 million between 2025 and 2027.

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

- Given the ageing rate of the population and the low fertility rate, the proportion of working-age people (18 to 64 years old) in B.C. is expected to reduce rapidly without international migration. As such, immigration is essential to sustain B.C.'s working-age population.
- Without international immigration to B.C., BC Stats projects that the share of the working-age population (18 to 64 years old) would reduce by 5 percent between 2024 and 2046, changing from 64 percent in 2024 to 59 percent by 2046.
- The current number of international migrants expected to arrive in the province in the coming years is projected to keep the share of the working-age population at around 63 percent, over the longer term.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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

- B.C. received 353,000 net international migrants between July 2022 and July 2024, of which 244,000 were temporary residents. This has been the largest increase of international migrants to the province on record and approximately four times larger than the average observed in a similar period during the last decade.
- On October 24, 2024, the federal government released its annual Immigration Levels Plan for 2025-2027 and announced it would be reducing admission targets for the number of new permanent residents it admits each year; the reduction includes temporary resident targets for the first time.
- Major changes to the levels plan include:
 1. A 25 percent reduction in permanent resident admission targets between 2024 (485,000) and 2027 (365,000),
 2. Targets for new temporary resident arrivals to reduce from over 7 percent of the national population now to 5 percent by the end of 2026, and
 3. Targets for admissions under the Provincial Nominee Program will be reduced by 50 percent from 110,000 in 2024 to 55,000 in each of 2025, 2026 and 2027.
- These changes to international immigration levels are expected to stall population growth in B.C. between 2025 and 2027 due to outflows of temporary residents returning to their countries of origin. However, international migration is expected to remain

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

the main contributor to population growth for the foreseeable future.

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

- The province's population is aging rapidly as the Baby Boomers, Canada's largest population cohort, reach retirement age. In 2025, the share of people aged 65 and older is expected to exceed 20 percent of B.C.'s population.
- B.C. has the lowest fertility rate in Canada. The ageing 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. So, the population of B.C. would decrease without migration from outside B.C.

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 nearly 85 percent of B.C.'s international migrants between July 2022 and July 2024, according to Statistics Canada.
- 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 2030, Surrey is projected to surpass Vancouver as B.C.'s largest municipality.

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

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 three to five years, typically with one update per Census cycle. As such, the projections from Statistics Canada can become outdated if there are large unforeseen developments in the interim years 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 its sub-provincial geographies including municipalities, regional districts, health areas, school districts and various other B.C. administrative boundaries. Multiple branches of government and the private sector use this geographically disaggregated information for planning.

Contact:

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

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 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

Revised: Date of last revision, February 10, 2025

Key Messages:

- We recognize that Indigenous Peoples 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 licences, 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 including an Indigenous name in one system but not in others risks cutting off individuals from crucial services. We must proceed carefully to ensure people's access to services is maintained in an integrated way.
- We are looking at an interim dual language approach, which will work with systems that can accept Indigenous language characters and systems that cannot.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- **This means we can make meaningful progress right away in the areas we have heard from Indigenous Peoples are most important: using people's names in services like name registration and school report cards, while accounting for dependencies on other systems and maintaining access to services.**

Questions and Answers:

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

- For government systems to work with Indigenous language characters, they need a specific computer coding language, specialized fonts and keyboards, compatible databases, programming so systems can talk to each other, and programming to display and print.
- There are over 1200 systems in core government that need these changes — it is not an easy fix and requires much more than downloading a font.

2) How long will it take to include Indigenous languages in government records and systems ?

- The target is to have all government systems able to support Indigenous languages within 10 years, starting with individual's names on ID and in core services prioritized by Indigenous Peoples.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

3) Does this impact the federal government?

- Federal government services are accessed using ID people are issued in B.C. and information from B.C systems. The Ministry of Citizens' Services is coordinating with federal partners to minimize risk and impacts of changes made in B.C.

Contact:

Eowynn Bosomworth Executive Director BC Data Service 250-886-7296

2025/26 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, February 03, 2025

Key Messages:

- The Provincial Data Plan is a pathway to focus our efforts on initiatives that matter most. It supports implementation of the Anti-Racism Data Act, and commitments 3.14 and 3.15 in the Declaration Act Action Plan.
- The Provincial Data Plan creates a stronger B.C. by addressing our systemic data challenges and taking innovative approaches to how we use data as the building blocks for modernizing government services.
- 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, and quality data is needed to understand and identify workable solutions to big issues in B.C. such as homelessness, systemic violence against women and girls, and the impact of climate change.

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- 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.
- As one of the priority actions under the Provincial Data Plan, the Data Management Policy helps ministries manage their data consistently and ethically in a strategic and user-focused way. The Data Management Policy was implemented in July 2023.

Data standards

- In February 2023, the Gender and Sex Data Standard was implemented to improve how we collect and use data to create policies and programs to serve B.C.'s gender-diverse population.
- In February 2024, the Indigenous Languages Technology Standard was 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. by outlining technical requirements for systems to read, write, store, process, and display Indigenous languages.
- We also continue to implement the Anti-Racism Data Act. In collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and the Anti-Racism

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Data Committee, we are working on anti-racism initiatives such as establishing 2025-2027 research priorities, developing data standards, and releasing statistics and other information to give insight into systemic racism and advance racial equity. From these insights, we can improve government programs and services for all people in the province.

- Under the Anti-Racism Data Act, BC Data Service (BCDS) is developing two new data standards: one regarding Indigenous identity and a second on racial identity. BCDS is working with Indigenous Peoples, the Anti-Racism Data Committee, and other partners such as the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner and Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, to co-develop these standards.

Questions and Answers:

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

- Under B.C.'s Declaration Act, we are working on advancing two actions: Action 3.14 to support the establishment of a First Nations led Regional Information Governance Centre; and, Action 3.15 to include Indigenous languages in systems and services.
- We are also working with Indigenous Peoples and other Indigenous partners to co-develop a new data standard regarding Indigenous identity.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The updated standard is targeted for release in 2025 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.

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

- No. The B.C. government is responsible for protecting privacy, including sensitive data that is collected by government.
- Under the Provincial Data Plan to increase evidence-based decision making, Ministry of Citizens' Services programs and services (such as the [Data Innovation Program](#)) are being enhanced to support analysis on de-identified data. The Data Innovation Program does not permit access by the private sector.
- The Ministry of 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 (for example, natural resources statistics on government programs).

3) How is the Provincial Data 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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 population level, de-identified data is used safely.

Contact:

Eowynn Bosomworth Executive Director BC Data Service 250-886-7296

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: Facts and Figures – Freedom of Information (FOI)

Revised: Date of last revision, January 30, 2025

Freedom of Information (FOI) – Key Messages

- In 2023/24, FOI applicants received information, on average, 26 days faster than in the previous fiscal year.
- In 2023/24, 84 percent of requests were completed on time. This is an improvement from 78 percent in 2022/23.
- In 2023/24, ministries published over 4,100 proactive disclosures — making it easier for people to access information without the need for a formal FOI request.
- In 2023/24, ministries completed 1,214 Privacy Impact Assessments — helping to ensure government initiatives and programs are designed in a privacy enhancing manner.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Request Volumes

- In 2023/24, ministries received nearly 8,000 requests and processed approximately 2 million pages of information.
- In 2023/24, 84 percent of requests were completed on time. This is an improvement from 78 percent in 2022/23.

Note: A request is “on time” if the applicant receives a response within the legislated time limit for responding. The legislated time period for responding to a request can be 30 days for

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

simpler requests or 60 days or more for larger, more complex requests that require consultations with third parties.

- In 2023/24, the average number of days to respond to an FOI request was 59 days. This is an improvement from 85 days in 2022/23.

Proactive Disclosure

- In 2023/24, we started proactively releasing summaries of briefing notes prepared for Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers, bringing the total number of proactive disclosure categories to 17.
- The 17 categories of records that are designated for proactive disclosure are:
 - Summaries of Deputy Ministers Briefing Notes
 - Summaries of Ministers of State Briefing Notes
 - Parliamentary Secretaries' Calendars
 - Summaries of Ministerial Briefing Notes
 - Estimates Notes
 - Corporate Transition Binder
 - Ministers' Transition Binders
 - Deputy Ministers' Travel Expense Summaries
 - Purchasing Card and Business Transaction Account Expenditures

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Summaries of Open and Closed Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests
- Records Released in Response to a Freedom of Information (FOI) Request
- Gaming Grants Paid to Community Organizations
- Ministers' and Deputy Ministers' Calendars
- Directly-Awarded Contracts
- Ministers' Travel Receipts
- Summaries of Contracts with Values over \$10,000 CAD
- Summaries of Alternative Service Delivery Contracts

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 quickly resolved.
- 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.

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

- 4,025 potential privacy breaches were reported in the 2023/24 fiscal year.
- Of those, only 25 (or 0.6 percent) were confirmed as significant privacy breaches requiring notification to affected individuals.

Privacy Impact Assessments

- In the 2023/24 fiscal year, 1,214 Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) were conducted.
- PIAs are used to review the privacy risk of a new system, project, program, or activity. This step-by-step review process ensures that government protects the personal information collected or used in accordance with the privacy requirements outlined in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Attachment: Report on the Administration of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act – FY 2023/24

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe	Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Records Officer	OCIO - Corporate Information and Records Management Office	Government Financial Information
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This material will be proactively released.

Report on the administration of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act **2023/24**

April 25, 2024

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 2023/24 fiscal year. Outlined in this report are steps my ministry has taken in support of the 2020 and 2022 Ministry of Citizens' Services 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 2023/24 to improve accountability and transparency through increased access to information through freedom of information and proactive disclosure. This year, the Ministry completed onboarding of all ministries to its new, modernized FOI system, and invested in best-in-class digital tools. Two new directives were published requiring the monthly proactive disclosure of summaries of Briefing Notes provided to Deputy Ministers and Ministers of State.

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 George Chow
Minister of Citizens' Services

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

Table of Contents

2023/24 FOIPPA Overview.....1

Information Access2

 2023/24 Highlights.....2

 Key Figures.....3

Privacy Protection6

 2023/24 Highlights.....6

 Key Figures.....7

Looking Ahead.....9

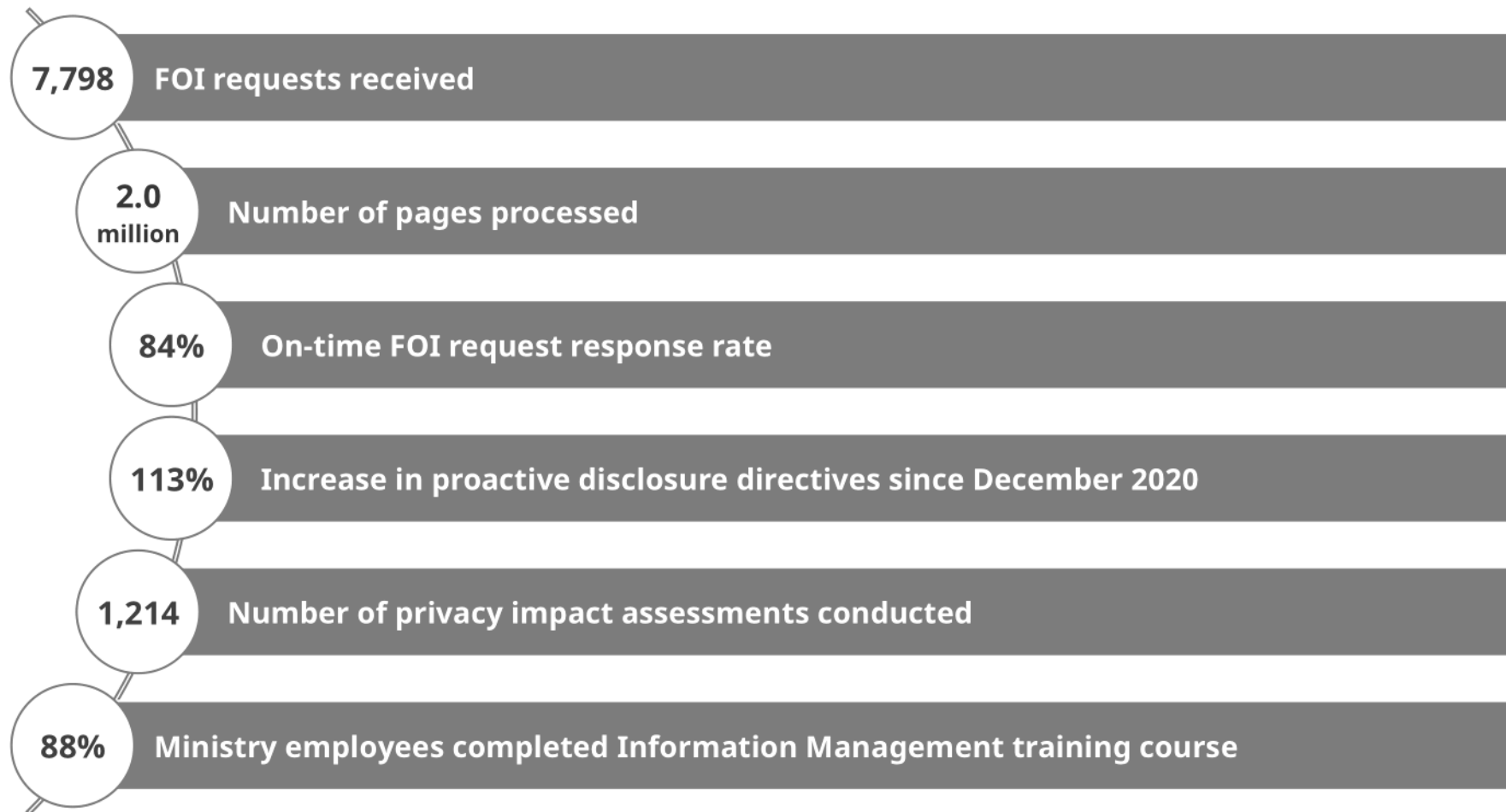
Appendix – FOIPPA by the numbers11

 Freedom of Information11

 Privacy Protection.....18

2023/24 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.

2023/24 Highlights

FOI Modernization Project Update

Since fiscal year 2020/21, the Ministry has committed \$7.7M to modernize and improve FOI services to ministries, inclusive of a new funding commitment of \$2.2M in the 2023/24 fiscal year. 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 2023/24 fiscal year, the Ministry completed onboarding for all ministries to the new, modernized system.

An evaluation of the system's 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%.

Since the pilot, the system has been further improved with:

- » The automatic removal of duplicate records, which reduces the time to respond to FOI requests.
- » New redaction capabilities that accelerate the process of reviewing records.

MCFD FOI Service Delivery Project

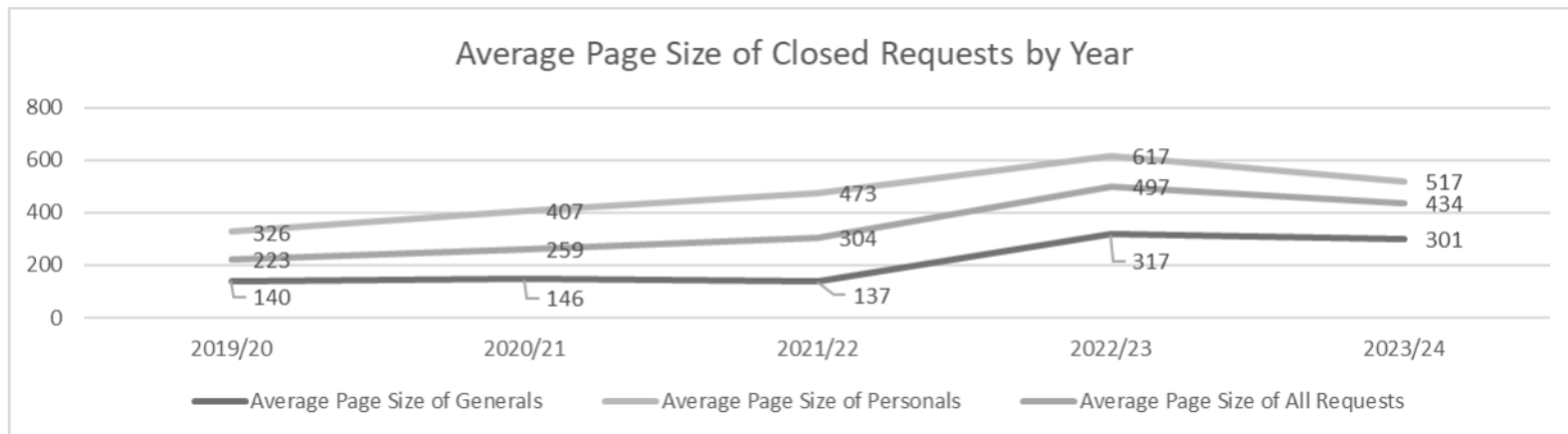
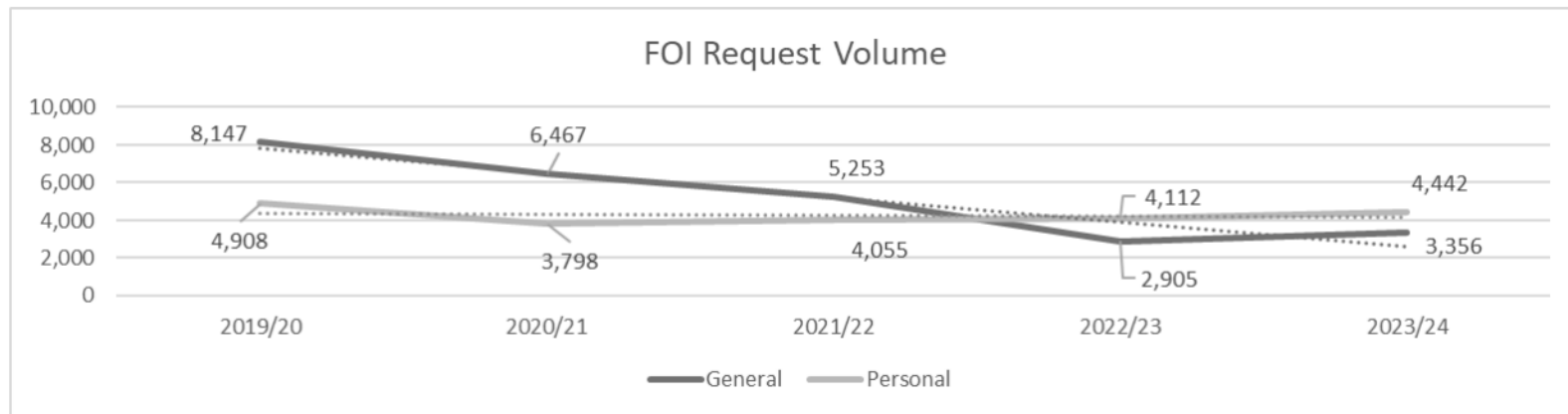
In the 2021/22 and 2022/23 annual reports, the Ministry reported on the partnership it established with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to improve service delivery for personal FOI requests in that ministry. Due to the success of this collaboration, the two ministries have agreed to continued collaboration and dedicated financial support for the purpose of processing these complex overdue requests through March 31, 2025. Results in the 2023/24 fiscal year include closing more than 200 overdue requests, containing approximately 650,000 pages.

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 2019/20, the volume of personal requests has remained relatively steady. However, over the same period, the average number of pages under review in a personal FOI request has increased from 326 to 517 pages. The volume of general requests has increased 16% over the prior fiscal year. Since fiscal year 2019/20, the average number of pages under review in a general request has more than doubled, increasing from 140 to 301.

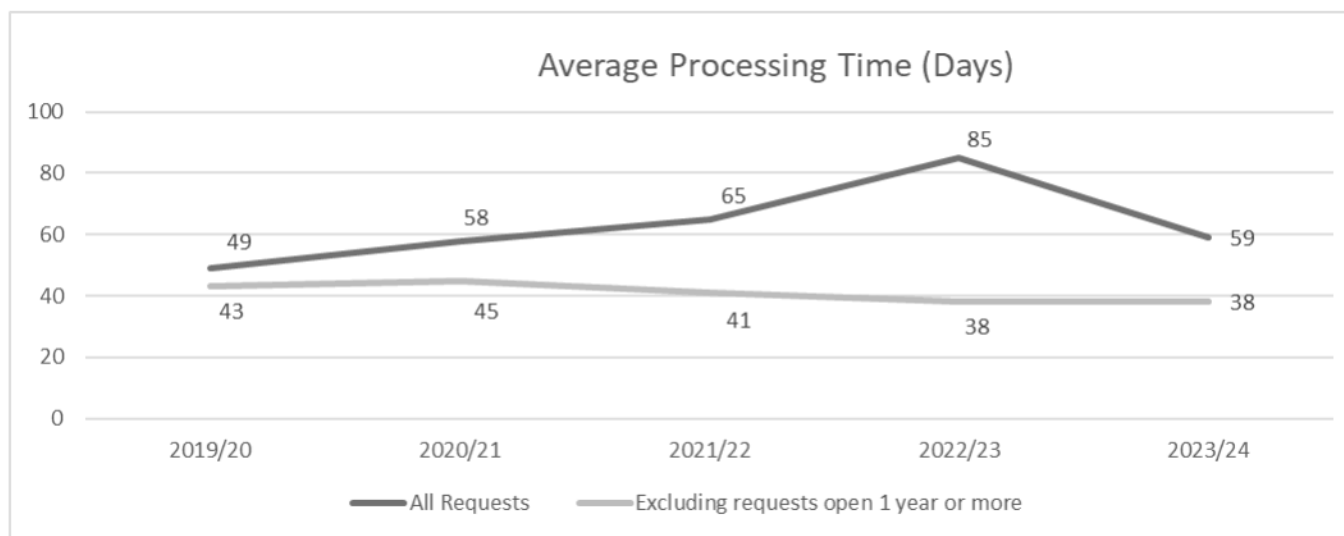


Processing Time

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 improved over the prior fiscal year, from 85 days to 59 days. This metric continues to be impacted by government's ongoing commitment to respond to and close overdue requests. Because the processing time for responding to a request is not calculated until a request is closed, a focus on closing overdue requests negatively affects the on-time and average processing days response rate for that fiscal year. In the 2023/24 fiscal year, ministries responded to 84% of FOI requests on time.

However, when complex requests that were overdue by a year or more (approximately 3% of files closed in 2023/24) are excluded from the total number of requests closed, government responded on time to 87% of FOI requests on time. 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 has remained at 38 days.

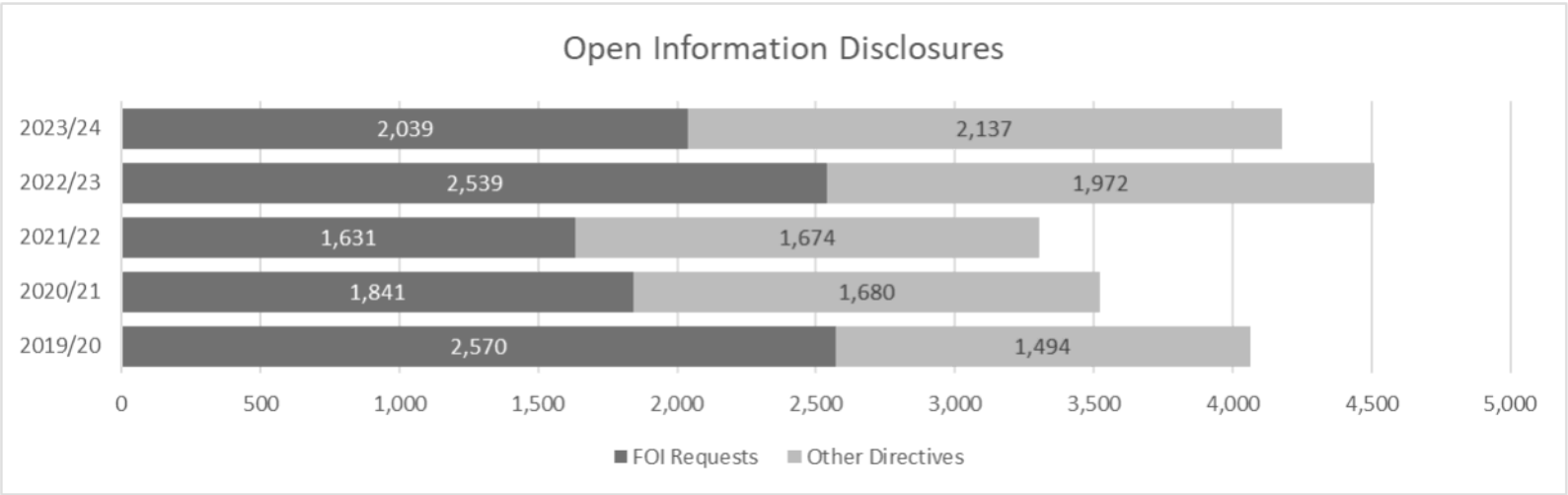


Proactive Disclosure

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 113% 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. Since the 2019/20 fiscal year, over nineteen thousand disclosures have been made under these directives. Two new ministerial directives came into effect in March 2024 to require the proactive disclosure of summaries of Briefing Notes provided to Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers, which brings the total to 17 categories of records that are proactively released to the public. Examples of other categories include 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](#).



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.

2023/24 Highlights

Guidance on the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence

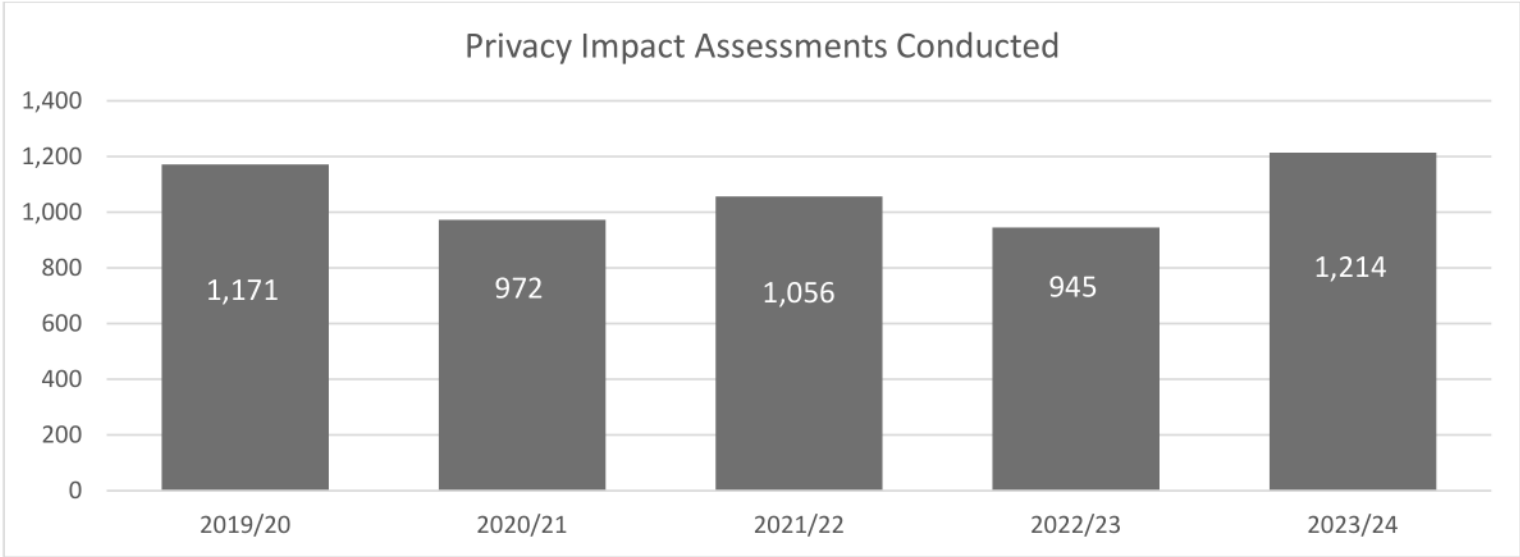
The BC Public Service is interested in exploring beneficial uses of AI to improve service delivery for British Columbians. However, government must carefully consider the risks and challenges that AI poses, including privacy and information security concerns, as well as data bias, fairness, and human rights issues. In the 2023/24 fiscal year, the Government Chief Information Officer issued interim guidance on the use of generative AI. The interim guidance contains privacy enhancing direction including restricting employees from putting any confidential information, including personal information, into third-party generative AI tools; and requiring employees to review the outputs to ensure that they are factually accurate, complete, and up-to-date.

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.

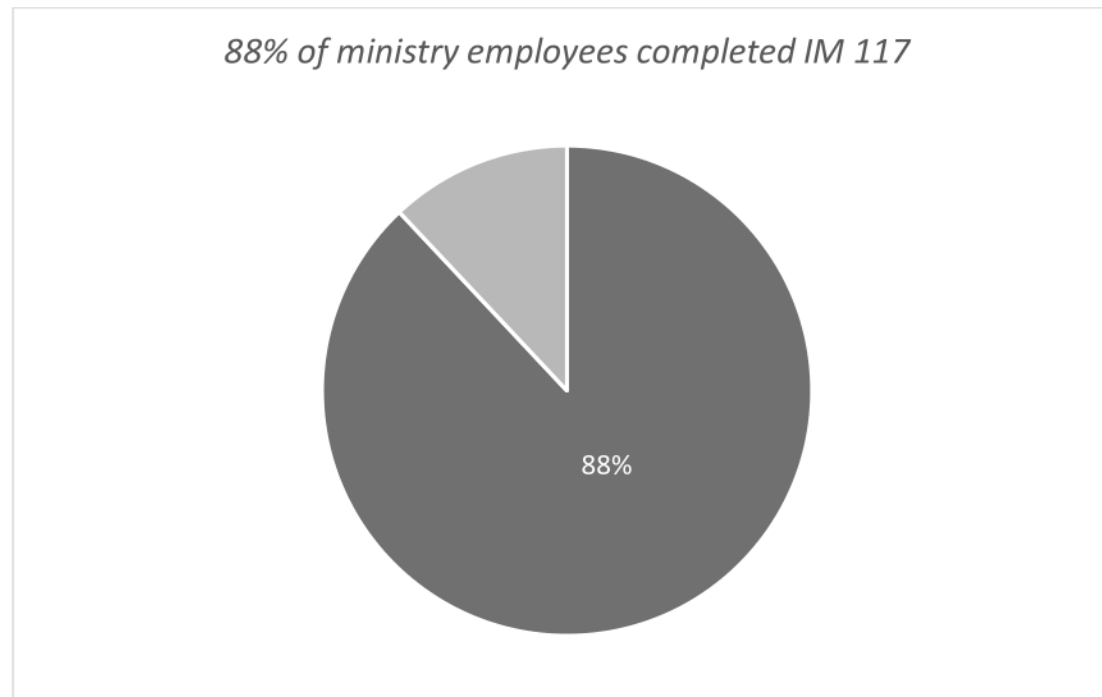
Completing a PIA helps protect privacy and builds public trust by being clear about what information a ministry is handling; who has access to it; and how it is stored.



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. In the 2023/24 fiscal year, Public Service employees were in year one of the two-year completion cycle, and therefore must complete the course before 2024/25. As of the end of the 2023/24 fiscal year, eighty eight percent of B.C. government employees had completed IM117.



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.

Additional planned enhancements include:

- » Improvements that speed up ministries' review and approval of records.
- » Innovative tools such as natural language processing to speed up the process of reviewing records.
- » Streamlining the consultation process to save time and ensure consistency.
- » Integrating the new system with the publishing of information on the Open Information website.

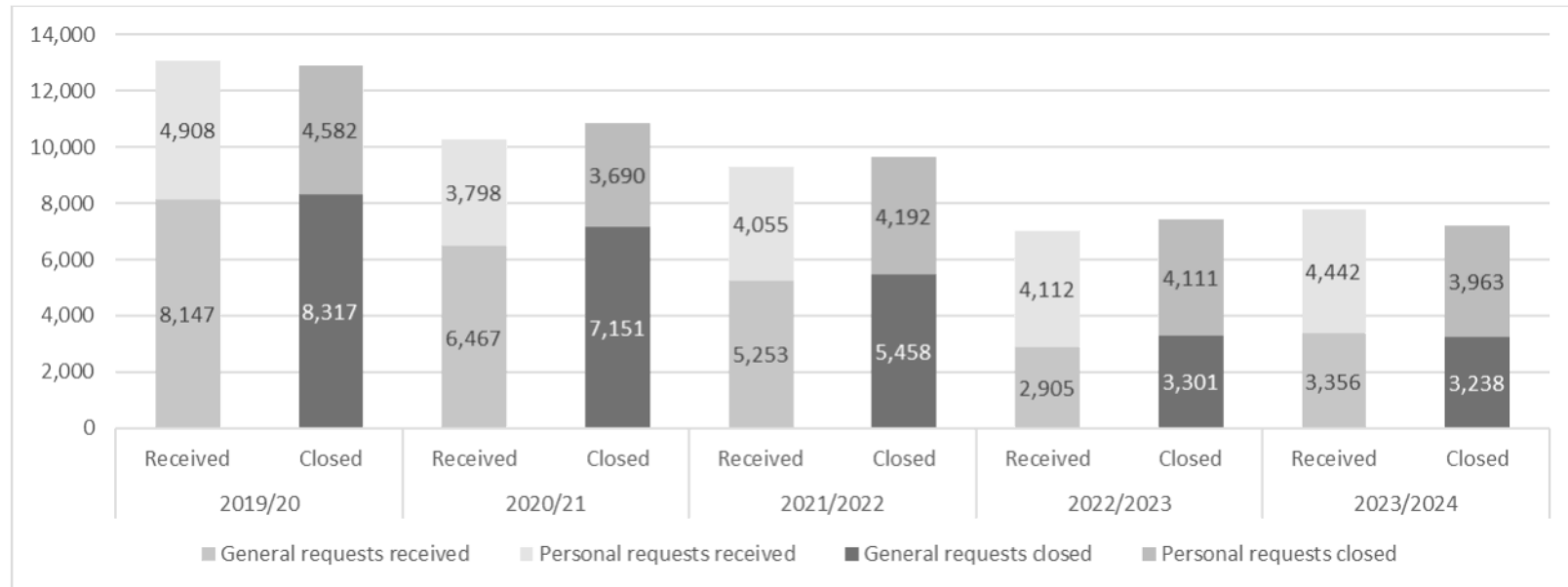


Appendix – FOIPPA by the numbers

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.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total*	2,933	2,323	1,371*	470	616

* Beginning in 2021/22 FOI trends have seen applicants directing more targeted requests to specific ministries, rather than submitting broad requests to many ministries.

Requests Received by Ministry	2022/23		2023/24	
	General	Personal	General	Personal
Agriculture and Food	70	8	70	0
Attorney General	160	99	159	110
Children and Family Development	82	2,020	76	2,278
Citizens' Services	81	4	87	13
Education and Child Care	110	25	158	21
Emergency Management and Climate Readiness	62	1	53	0
Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation	109	-	154	1
Environment and Climate Change Strategy	268	10	261	17
Finance	272	416	277	364
Forests	292	8	274	11
Health	254	41	239	64
Housing	28	1	137	10
Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation	36	1	109	1
Jobs, Economic Recovery, Development and Innovation	58	-	45	1
Labour	56	8	60	7
Mental Health and Addictions	49	-	74	5
Municipal Affairs	46	7	64	12
Office of the Premier	133	1	153	5
Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills	50	2	89	8
Public Safety and Solicitor General	226	616	226	655
Social Development and Poverty Reduction	53	830	52	839
Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport	64	3	58	2
Transportation and Infrastructure	201	6	289	12
Water, Land and Resource Stewardship	145	5	192	6
TOTAL	2,905	4,112	3,356	4,442

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*
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	1,429	2,091	243	91	908	163	286	15	19	8
2022/23	809	909	243	92	286	239	291	9	11	16
2023/24	910	735	298	41	405	525	398	18	13	13

* 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*
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
2023/24	3,269	0	1,052	0	1	31	26	22	25	16

* 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
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
2023/24	2,039	2,137	4,176
TOTAL	10,620	8,957	19,577

* Previously titled Open Information Disclosures.

** In total, seventeen 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
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
2023/24	687	3,696	97	2	198	153

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
2019/20	271	59
2020/21	234	77
2021/22	182	62
2022/23	150	57
2023/24	172	79

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
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
2023/24	706	328	0	49	37	997

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.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total FOI Requests	13,055	10,265	9,308	7,017	7,798
General Requests	8,147	6,467	5,253	2,905	3,356
Number of Requests Where Processing Fees Paid	145	144	143	171	192
Sum of Processing Fees Paid (nearest thousand)	\$44,000	\$51,000	\$50,000	\$53,000	\$54,000
Percent of General Requests Where Processing Fees Paid	1.74%	2.01%	2.70%	5.88%	5.72%
Average Processing Fee for all FOI Requests	\$3	\$5	\$5	\$7.50	\$7
\$10 application fees paid for General Requests	--	--	\$11,950*	\$26,930	\$29,650

* 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.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Operational PIA	946	740	823	707	961
LPIA/RPIA	225	232	233	238	253
Total PIA	1,171	972	1,056	945	1,214

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.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Reported (Privacy Breaches & Complaints)	2,234	1,978	2,487	3,114	4,025
Investigations Conducted	1,889	1,621	2,043	2,556	3,991
Violations Occurred	1,405	1,455	1,897	2,439	3,923
Instances Where Breach Notification Required (% of violations)	115 (8.2%)	124 (8.5%)	100 (5.3%)	116 (4.8%)	25 (0.6%)

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.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Tier 1	1,519	1,369	1,825	2,128	3,756
Tier 2	241	247	254	349	175
Tier 3	129	113	84	109	94
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.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Complaints Reported	74	71	57	52	43
Complaints Substantiated	24	29	27	28	20

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: Freedom of Information: Improving Timelines for Responding to Requests

Revised: Date of last revision, February 12, 2025

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.
- In 2023/24, we significantly reduced the timelines for responding to an FOI request.
 - We responded to 84 percent of FOI requests on time in 2023/24, a 6 percent increase compared to 2022/23.
 - We also reduced the average number of days to respond to a request by 26 days. FOI applicants received a response within an average of 59 days, compared to 85 days in 2022/23.
- Ministry staff meet regularly with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review progress and discuss additional measures to improve timeliness.
- We have implemented a number of measures to improve FOI timelines and services:
 - Since 2021 we have committed over \$8.2 million to modernize our FOI services with a new unified system.

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- We increased the amount of information that is proactively available to the public without an FOI request.
 - In 2023/24, we increased the number of proactive disclosure categories to 17 and published over 4,100 proactive disclosures.

Questions and Answers:

1) The Information and Privacy Commissioner issued a report in January 2024 on government's Freedom of Information (FOI) timeliness. What have you done in response?

- I thank the Commissioner for his report.
- We have reviewed the recommendations in the Commissioner's report and have met with the Commissioner and his staff to discuss our plans to continue to improve timeliness.
 - We continue to invest in modern technology, data and reporting to find efficiency in how we process FOI requests across government.
 - We continue to work with ministries to identify new opportunities to make information proactively available without a request.
- We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Commissioner's office on this important work.

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

2) Does government still have a backlog of requests? How big is it and what is government doing to address it?

- Requests that enter the backlog are typically large, complex, and involve multiple parties that need to be consulted.
- Requests for personal information made to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) accounted for over 75 percent of the overdue backlog that existed at the end of FY 2023/24.
- To address the backlog of MCFD requests, government has provided dedicated funding to processing these large and complex requests. This funding has increased staffing by 20 full-time employees and enabled the review of over 2 million pages of records.

3) How is the \$8.2 million investment improving timeliness?

- Since 2021, we have committed over \$8.2 million to modernize and improve Freedom of Information (FOI) services.
- By improving tools and streamlining the FOI system, we are improving the applicant experience with more timely responses to FOI requests and a more transparent and easier to use process.
- In 2023/24, we significantly reduced the timelines for responding to an FOI request.
 - We responded to 84 percent of FOI requests on time in 2023/24, a 6 percent improvement over 2022/23.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- We also reduced the average number of days to respond to a request by 26 days. FOI applicants received a response within an average of 59 days, compared to 85 days in 2022/23.

4) How is proactive disclosure improving timeliness?

- In the past 5 years, this government has proactively published over 19,500 disclosures under mandatory directives. These are 19,500 disclosures that did not require the submission of a Freedom of Information request.
- There are 17 categories of records that are designated for proactive disclosure:
 - Summaries of Deputy Ministers Briefing Notes
 - Summaries of Ministers of State Briefing Notes
 - Parliamentary Secretaries' Calendars
 - Summaries of Ministerial Briefing Notes
 - Estimates Notes
 - Corporate Transition Binder
 - Ministers' Transition Binders
 - Deputy Ministers' Travel Expense Summaries
 - Purchasing Card and Business Transaction Account Expenditures
 - Summaries of Open and Closed Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests
 - Records Released in Response to a Freedom of Information (FOI) Request

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Gaming Grants Paid to Community Organizations
- Ministers' and Deputy Ministers' Calendars
- Directly-Awarded Contracts
- Ministers' Travel Receipts
- Summaries of Contracts with Values over \$10,000 CAD
- Summaries of Alternative Service Delivery Contracts

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe

Assistant Deputy
Minister and Chief
Records Officer

OCIO – Corporate
Information and Records
Management Office

Government Financial
Information

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2025/26 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, February 18, 2025

Key Messages:

- My ministry is committed to providing timely and helpful Freedom of Information (FOI) services to the people in 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 application fee for non-personal FOI requests is in line with fees charged in other jurisdictions in Canada.
- Since the introduction of the application fee, my ministry has been monitoring its impact.
- While the fee does not appear to pose a barrier to making an FOI request, we continue to monitor its impact and make informed improvements to our FOI services.

Questions and Answers:

1) Has the \$10 application fee resulted in fewer Freedom of Information (FOI) requests being made?

- The volume of FOI requests made by individuals continues to be consistent with previous years.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- We have increased the amount of information that is proactively disclosed so individuals no longer need to make an FOI request for that information.
- There has been a reduction in the volume of broad, cross-government requests.
 - Cross-government requests have reduced in number from 2,323 in FY 2020/21 to 616 in FY 2023/24.
Note: "Cross-government" requests are those that are sent to four or more ministries.
 - 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 enabled us to put more resources into proactive disclosure to increase the amount of information we make available to the public on an ongoing basis without an FOI request.

2) Requests from political parties have dropped significantly. Isn't it clear that the fee is preventing political parties from accessing information?

- The decrease in political party requests began before the application fee was introduced.
- Political parties used to submit Freedom of Information (FOI) requests for records that are now proactively disclosed, for

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

example, ministers' calendars, lists of briefing notes and lists of contract awards.

- In 2023/24, political parties accounted for 22 percent of the non-personal requests made to government which indicates that political parties continue to actively file FOI requests.
- In 2023/24, the B.C. government proactively disclosed over 4,100 sets of records. This means political parties and other applicants no longer need to make FOI requests to access this information.

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

- Members of the media continue to submit a substantial volume of requests. It does not appear that the fee is preventing media from accessing the Freedom of Information system.
- A large reduction in the number of media requests can be attributed to a single media applicant who previously made 76 percent of all media requests and now makes approximately 21 percent of media requests.

4) Have you implemented the five recommendations made in the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner's application fee report?

- I want to thank the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for its report.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- For the most part, the B.C. government was already doing the things the report recommended. There were only a few areas where the Commissioner recommended additional measures for the B.C. Government.
- Since then, we have implemented all of the report's recommendations.

5) Will you repeal the Freedom of Information (FOI) application fee?

- We will continue to apply the application fee for non-personal requests.
- The application fee for non-personal requests is modest at \$10 and is in line with other jurisdictions.
- People requesting their own personal information pay no fee at all, and Indigenous Governing Entities are not required to pay an application fee.
- 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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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

6) Why is the application fee so high to make a cross-government request? We have heard that \$280 was charged to one media applicant who made a cross-government request.

- Under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, each government ministry is a separate public body – and this has been the case since the Act's creation in 1993.
- An applicant is charged \$10 for each non-personal request to each ministry.
 - If an applicant makes the same request to two ministries, they would be charged \$20.
 - There are 24 ministries, including the Office of the Premier. If an applicant makes a request to every ministry, the maximum application fee they would be charged is \$240.
- If an applicant requests records from an incorrect ministry, the request would be transferred to the correct ministry and the fee is applied only once.

Contact:

Melissa Sexsmith	Executive Director	OCIO – Corporate Information and Records Management Office	250-514-2173
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2025/26 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 and Public Statements

Revised: Date of last revision, February 07, 2025

Key Messages:

- Protecting the privacy and access rights of people in British Columbia is a top priority.
- We appreciate the work the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner has undertaken over the last year.
- We share a common interest in:
 - Improving access to information and government transparency; and
 - Protecting personal information that is entrusted to government.

Questions and Answers:

1) If asked about the recent public statement calling to amend the Personal Information Protection Act to provide the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner with the authority to levy administrative monetary penalties:

- Protecting the privacy rights of people in British Columbia is a top priority.
- We appreciate the work of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and thank them for this recommendation.

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- We will consider this recommendation when there is an opportunity to update the Personal Information Protection Act.

2) If asked about the recent joint resolution with other privacy commissioners and ombudspersons calling for transparency by default in government operations:

- We agree that transparency is important – it is the cornerstone of a healthy democracy.
- We appreciate the work that the privacy commissioners and the ombudspersons undertook to provide guidance on transparency by default.
- Government has committed to improving public transparency and accountability by increasing access to government information, particularly through proactive disclosure.
 - Government has consistently proactively disclosed over 4,000 records yearly.

3) If asked about the recent joint resolution with other privacy commissioners and ombudspersons addressing responsible information sharing in situations involving intimate partner violence:

- We agree that it is important to share information to prevent and mitigate intimate partner violence.
- We appreciate the work that the privacy commissioners and the ombudspersons undertook on this important issue.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Including the commitment by the Commissioner to clarify permissible disclosures under privacy laws.
- We are committed to working across government to improve appropriate information sharing practices and to address both real and perceived barriers.

4) If asked about the recent joint resolution with other privacy commissioners and ombudspersons addressing deceptive design practices:

- Children's online privacy is an important issue for Government.
- We thank the Commissioner for bringing the work on the privacy sweep and findings around deceptive design practices to our attention.
- We are looking at ways to improve protections in the public sector that work for B.C. and align with federal and international models.

5) Joint Investigation: ChatGPT

- The investigation was launched in May 2023 and is ongoing.
- No updates have been shared since the announcement.
- It is not appropriate for Government to comment on an ongoing investigation by the Commissioner's office.

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

6) Joint Investigation: TikTok

- The investigation was launched in February 2023 and is ongoing.
- In March 2023, the B.C. government banned the use of TikTok from government devices.
- No updates have been shared since the announcement.
- It is not appropriate for Government to comment on an ongoing investigation by the Commissioner's office.

7) If asked about Municipal Records Disclosure Report (Feb. 2025)

- I have asked staff to review the recommendation directed at Government.

Contact:

Charmaine Lowe

Assistant Deputy
Minister and Chief
Records Officer

OCIO – Corporate
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This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 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 15, 2025

Key Messages:

- People and businesses need government services that are effective, efficient and easy to use.
- 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/ 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.
 - The Pay Transparency Reporting Tool project for employers to prepare and post pay transparency reports

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

required under the new Pay Transparency Act, which exposes 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 size of the Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) capital budget?

- The budget is reviewed annually as part of government's overall budget process and set by Treasury Board.
- The Deputy Ministers' Committee on Digital and Data provides recommendations to Treasury Board on the need for IM/IT capital investment.

2) Are all Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) investments funded through this \$110 million funding allocation?

- All IM/IT investments under \$50 million in total require the approval of the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Digital and Data (DMCDD).
- Larger IM/IT investments require both the DMCDD's endorsement and Treasury Board approval.

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

3) What is the status of the 2025/26 Information Management/ Information Technology (IM/IT) capital funding allocation?

- Currently the 2025/26 IM/IT capital funding allocation is \$110 million.

4) How are you supporting government's emerging priorities with capital funding that is already mostly allocated?

- The Deputy Ministers' Committee on Digital and Data (DMCDD) 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 commitments and legislated requirements. Ministries can prioritize their projects to respond to emerging priorities, such as housing affordability and primary care.
- The DMCDD closely monitors approved projects and can re-allocate funds that become available to other top priority projects.

Contact:

Genevieve Lambert Chief Digital Officer OICO - Digital Office 250-217-6296

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 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, 2025

Key Messages:

- **Government is delivering efficient, effective and easily accessible digital services to people living in B.C.**
- **The pandemic, floods, and wildfires reinforced the importance of providing easily accessible, accurate and reliable digital services to people in 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, 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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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- The Ministry of Citizens' Services 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 2023, the ministry released a new cross-government digital plan, which outlines measures government will take to modernize services to better meet people's needs.
- In 2023, the ministry also 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 people in B.C. The Digital Code of Practice also helps manage risks that can be associated with major technology projects.
- In 2024, the ministry released the Digital Plan progress report, which showcases how teams are improving digital services and delivering innovative solutions that enhance service experiences for people in B.C.

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

- Digital approaches are critical to the success of every government initiative.

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- People expect to be able to access services online, as well as in person.
- With the Connecting British Columbia and Connecting Communities BC programs bringing high-speed internet to households in rural and underserved areas of B.C., 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 people in B.C. as we tackle today's challenges.
- For example, digital tools help ensure child protection workers have the right information while working in the field and 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 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- They include improving people's experiences, reducing costs and supporting technology within the B.C. economy.

3) How has digital helped government improve services?

- Over the past few years, the B.C. Government has been increasing its investment and using modern digital approaches to improve many services for the people in B.C. Impacts from these investments have 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 in 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 people in the province.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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:

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

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: B.C.'s Cloud-smart Approach, Data Residency, Privacy and Security

Revised: Date of last revision, January 22, 2025

Key Messages:

- 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 enabling ministries to build and launch applications using secure and reliable cloud hosting services.
- The B.C. government worked with the federal government to order cloud services that comply with B.C.'s legislation and policy.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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 secure 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.
- Ministries are enabled to access cloud services from the vendors that best meet their needs. Some examples are Microsoft, Amazon, Google, Oracle and Salesforce.
- Robust security measures and protocols are in place for the use of cloud services to protect data and applications.

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

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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) Is cloud 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.
- Ministries can access cloud hosting services once they determine that cloud is the best option for their business and technical needs and after completing their compliance assessment.
- The use of cloud technology is allowing ministries to make improvements to the services that people in B.C. rely on.

6) (If asked) Is any British Columbians' personal information currently stored outside of B.C. or Canada?

- Most of British Columbians' personal information continues to be stored inside of Canada.
- If any ministry or other public body in B.C. intends to store sensitive personal information outside of Canada, they are legally

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

required to conduct an additional privacy protection assessment on top of the Privacy Impact Assessment that is already required.

- The 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.

7) (If asked) How is personal information stored outside of Canada protected?

- People's personal data continues to be safe and protected.
- Personal information entrusted to government is safe, no matter where it is stored. It is protected by our robust privacy and security controls.
- Data residency requirements don't protect information – effective privacy and security controls protect information.

Contacts:

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: Artificial Intelligence

Revised: Date of last revision, February 10, 2025

Key Messages:

- Government sees many opportunities to improve service delivery for people in British Columbia with the thoughtful use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), freeing up staff time to focus on better services for people. We are supporting the implementation of AI solutions across government to improve service delivery, enhance business information access, and to streamline benefits processing, wildfire management, and environmental planning.
- In November 2024, we launched a comprehensive AI website providing awareness materials, responsible use principles, implementation guidance, and use cases that will be regularly updated.
- We also consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Human Rights Commissioner, and Ombudsperson on our guiding principles to use AI.
- We are committed to ensuring the transparent and responsible use of AI in government.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Questions and Answers:

1. What steps is government taking to regulate Artificial Intelligence (AI) while protecting people in British Columbia?

- There are existing laws that apply to AI in specific contexts like privacy, access to information, employment, human rights, intellectual property, and procurement.
- We are monitoring federal and provincial AI related legislative and policy efforts.
- We've established clear protocols for privacy protection and security compliance within all our initiatives, including AI initiatives.

2. How is government currently using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve services for people in British Columbia?

- The B.C. Government has implemented AI solutions across multiple ministries to improve service delivery:
 - AI tools can range from the chatbot that helps people find information on government's websites, to decision support tools that help predict weather events and fire behaviours.
 - In my ministry, Service BC's Business Search Tool employs machine learning to improve transparency and efficiency in accessing business information and name submissions
- Examples of AI use cases are showcased on the website that was launched in November 2024. The website will be updated with additional use cases as more solutions are developed.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

3. What principles guide the government's use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

- The draft AI principles are:
 - Transparency
 - Accountability
 - Public benefit
 - Fairness
 - Reliability
 - Safety
- Ministry staff met with staff from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Human Rights Commissioner, and Ombudsperson to discuss the principles.
- We incorporated their feedback and are continuing to engage with their offices.

4. How is government managing the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools?

- In August 2023, the Government Chief Information Officer issued interim generative AI guidance to the B.C. public service that:
 - Prohibits employees from putting any confidential information, including personal information, into a third-party generative AI tool like ChatGPT;

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Requires employees to review generative AI outputs to ensure they are factually accurate, complete, and up to date; and,
- 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.
- We are currently running pilot projects to evaluate workplace productivity tools that use generative AI, ensuring they meet our security and privacy requirements before broader implementation.

5. Will government jobs be replaced by Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems?

- No. Market research and implementation evidence consistently shows that AI technology works best when it augments human capabilities rather than replacing them, making it easier for people to do their work effectively.
- We are taking a measured, supportive and strategic approach to modernizing service delivery. AI and other modern technologies are tools to help us meet fiscal challenges while enhancing service delivery.
- Our modernization strategy includes:
 - Regular evaluation of program efficiency and effectiveness
 - Investment in digital skills training
 - Focus on user experience and service improvements

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Evidence-based methods to evaluate and improve programs
- We are committed to managing changes carefully while delivering the high-quality services people in British Columbia expect.

6. Why was DeepSeek Artificial Intelligence (AI) banned on government devices?

- Protection of government data and networks is one of our top priorities.
- We must carefully balance the exploration and use of AI with our responsibility to protect our systems.
- A recent security review by the Office of the Chief Information Officer identified security concerns with a new AI tool called DeepSeek AI.
- For that reason, DeepSeek AI is banned on government-issued devices.

Contact:

Hayden Lansdell	Associate DM and Government Chief Information Officer	Office of the Chief Information Officer	250-415-0118
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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: Cybersecurity

Revised: Date of last revision, February 11, 2025

Key Messages:

- Protection and resiliency of government systems and data is a top priority for this government, especially where it concerns the personal information of people in British Columbia.
- Governments must actively take steps to protect themselves from increasingly sophisticated cybersecurity threats.
- In the last three years, the number of daily unauthorized access attempts on the B.C. government has grown four-fold, from 372 million to 1.5 billion.
- Cybersecurity is not a point in time activity. It requires ongoing commitment in specialized skills, tools and technologies.
- In addition to the \$24 million that Government spends annually on its internal cybersecurity team, in Budget 2022, government invested \$50.8 million over three years to improve our ability to prevent, detect and respond to cyberattacks on government systems and ensure the protection of government-held data.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- **With the launch of our CyberBC program in 2023, we continuously work to raise awareness and provide training in cybersecurity and information protection for all employees.**
- **As people do more and more online, personally and professionally, cyber awareness and education becomes a shared interest for all of us in B.C.**
- **By working together, we can help manage and reduce the impact of cybersecurity threats throughout the province.**

Questions and Answers:

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

- The government faces constant threats, preventing 1.5 billion unauthorized access attempts daily.
- Cybersecurity is not a point in time activity. It requires ongoing commitment in specialized skills, tools and technologies.

2) Do we know more about the state-sponsored cyberattack reported in spring 2024?

- In April 2024, the Office of the Chief Information Officer within the Ministry of Citizens' Services identified a cybersecurity incident involving access to B.C. government networks.

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- The incident affected 22 Outlook email accounts. All affected individuals were notified and offered credit protection and identity theft monitoring services.
- To date, there has been no evidence of misuse of the information that was accessed and no evidence of any additional email accounts being accessed.

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

- As our work is increasingly digital, we are mindful of best practices for managing government information so that we can mitigate unavoidable issues like cybersecurity risks.
- Government continues to improve its cybersecurity resources to ensure government systems and information remain protected from increasing and sophisticated cybersecurity threats.
- Each year the Government invests and upgrades our cybersecurity tools to prevent, detect, and respond to cyberattacks.
- In addition to the \$24 million Government spends annually on its internal cybersecurity team, in Budget 2022, Government invested \$50.8 million over three years to improve our ability to prevent, detect and respond to cyberattacks on government systems and ensure the protection of government-held data.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

4) What support is Government providing to assist the public sector and protect personal information?

- Government shares tools and resources to assist and promote awareness with the public sector to protect personal information.
- In 2023, Government initiated its CyberBC pilot program to promote cyber education, awareness and grow cybersecurity capacity across the B.C. public sector.
- Government has recently established a Corporate Supply Arrangement to support the broader public sector with their cybersecurity program(s) and procuring cybersecurity advisory services through pre-qualified vendors.

5) What support is Government providing other public sector organizations like health authorities and libraries which have also been subject to cyberattacks in the last year?

- Government continues to collaborate, promote shared awareness and assist broader public sector organizations with cybersecurity best practices, incident responses and supports.
- Government has recently established a Corporate Supply Arrangement to support the broader public sector with their cybersecurity program(s) and procuring cybersecurity advisory services through pre-qualified vendors.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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

- Governments must actively take steps to protect themselves from increasingly sophisticated cyber threats.
- In the last three years, the number of daily unauthorized access attempts on the B.C. Government has grown four-fold, from 372 million to 1.5 billion.
- In Budget 2022, Government invested \$50.8 million over three years and we must ensure continued commitment so that we remain responsive to cybersecurity threats and ensure the protection of government systems and data within.

7) 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.
- 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

- 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.

8) Has the B.C. Government banned any other apps, in addition to TikTok?

- B.C. currently has three other apps, in addition to TikTok, that are banned from being installed on government-managed devices.
- DeepSeek, WeChat and ToTok are banned due to privacy and security concerns.

Contact:

Pamela Smith	A/Chief Information Security Office	OCIO – Enterprise Services	250-893-7156
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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: Digital Trust

Revised: Date of last revision, January 24, 2025

Key Messages:

- People in B.C. expect convenient access when interacting with online government services and for the government to keep their personal information safe.
- Digital Trust products and services enable trust and confidence in government digital services while ensuring privacy and security.
- Our goal is to ensure people in B.C. have trust in their digital interactions and are confident that their personal information is being protected.
- B.C. collaborates with other Canadian governments on shared Digital Trust priorities that would be of benefit for all Canadians.

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?

- The Province has been delivering identity services to people in B.C. for over 20 years. As technology evolves, staff work to ensure digital identity services continue to meet the needs of people in B.C. and that they remain resilient to increasingly sophisticated cybersecurity threats.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

2) Will all people in B.C. be required to have a digital credential at some point?

- There are no current plans to require digital credentials.
- Our goal is to provide people with the tools they need in order to use government services online in a trusted way.

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

- While the BC Wallet is currently not widely used, it was developed to ensure that we could be confident that government's privacy and security needs were met.

Contact:

Pam Smith A/Sr. Executive Director OCIO – Enterprise Services 250-893-1756

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2025/26 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, February 12, 2025

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	Actual
2019/20	4,800	6,816
2020/21	5,575	6,890
2021/22	5,800	6,108
2022/23 ¹	6,000	5,832
2023/24	6,200	8,858
2024/25*	9,400	12,510 as of January 6, 2025

*Note: The above supplier counts are from BC Bid and reflect all registered supplier organizations in BC Bid at the time the report was produced. A supplier organization in BC Bid must have at least one user associated with the account to be considered a registered supplier.

¹ The new BC Bid was released on May 30, 2022 (fiscal 2022/2023)

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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

Opportunities Posted in BC Bid²

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
2016/17	6,780	2,057	8,837
2017/18	7,402	2,407	9,809
2018/19	7,428	2,697	10,125
2019/20	7,537	2,529	10,066
2020/21	6,819	2,622	9,441
2021/22	7,687	2,472	10,159
2022/23	7,666	2,750	10,416
2023/24	7,542	2,491	10,033
2024/25*	5,713	1,697	7,410

*Note: The count of posted opportunities for fiscal 2024/25 encompass the period between April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

² Opportunity totals reflect most up-to-date data pulled from BC Bid on January 18, 2025.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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
2016/17	384	32	416
2017/18	397	34	431
2018/19	394	33	427
2019/20	385	33	418
2020/21	388	34	422
2021/22	404	34	438
2022/23	383	33	416
2023/24	389	35	420
2024/25	364	27	391

*Note: The count of organizations that posted opportunities in fiscal 2024/25 encompass the period between April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

Requests for Information (RFIs) and Discovery Days

- The BC Procurement Plan commits to engaging with smaller businesses and making it easier for them to do business with government, this is supported by RFIs and 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 33 Requests for Information RFIs 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.

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.
- The Marketplace continues to be an accessible way for more diverse businesses to provide their professional services to the province. In 2024, the Digital Marketplace supported 21 procurement competitions worth \$3.5 million, a majority of which were businesses located in B.C.
- As of January 2025, 224 opportunities with a total value of \$57 million have been awarded via the Digital Marketplace. A majority of these have been awarded to small-to-medium-sized tech companies.

Support to Citizens

- The Product Distribution Centre supports B.C. government ministry programs, broader public sector agencies, and publicly funded agencies with a variety of medical supplies and equipment, personal care products, and personal protective equipment.
- From April 1, 2024, to November 30, 2024, the Product Distribution

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Centre:

- Shipped 364,065 parcels with 66,554 total deliveries
- Procured and distributed 3,350 active stock keeping units
- Managed over 12,268 clients
- Managed 215 active contracts
- Call Centre received and actioned (Client and Corporate):
 - 47,738 orders
 - 40,568 calls
 - 29,835 emails
- Most of the services provided support medically fragile citizens with a direct-at-home care supply of medical devices and products.

Contact:

Stuart Restall	Assistant Deputy Minister	Procurement and Supply Division	250-812-5171
Genevieve Lambert	Chief Digital Officer	OCIO – Digital Office	250-217-6296

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2025/26 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 8, 2025

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.
- Following engagement with Indigenous partners, in 2022, government created an External Advisory Committee with representation from First Nation, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities.
- In fall 2023, we released an interim report on the Indigenous Procurement Initiative, the formation of the External Advisory Committee, progress to date and next steps.
- In partnership, the Province and the External Advisory Committee are co-developing an action 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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 see changes?

- 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 ("the Committee") meets regularly and is co-developing a plan with the Province of recommended short-, medium-, and long-term actions to address gaps and barriers.
- The timeline for implementing solutions will depend on the actions prioritized by the Committee.
- It is imperative to move forward at the speed of trust with our partners. By working collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples in B.C., we can ensure that the necessary time will be taken to create an equitable and responsive initiative.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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 External Advisory 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 benefit Indigenous businesses and communities throughout B.C.
 - Published the External Advisory Committee Interim Update, which provides more detail on the committee's work to date and next steps.

Contact:

Teresa Hartman	A/Executive Director	Procurement and Supply Division	778-676-0847
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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: 2024 British Columbia Procurement Plan

Revised: Date of last revision, January 08, 2025

Key Messages:

- In 2024, the Ministry of Citizens' Services released the **British Columbia Procurement Plan** (the 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 has 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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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The Plan builds on the British Columbia Procurement Strategy (Strategy) (2018) and British Columbia Procurement 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 Guidelines for Environmentally Responsible Procurement 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, environmental, or economic criteria to ensure best overall

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

outcomes for all people in British Columbia.

- **My ministry is involved in the planning processes for several large 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 Purchasing 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 Purchasing 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 10 percent 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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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- **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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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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3) What are the goals of the current British Columbia Procurement Plan (the Plan)?

- The Plan positions procurement as a strategic lever for change and has 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 British Columbia Procurement Plan accomplish?

- We have already begun to implement this revitalized vision for the future of procurement in B.C.
- We have applied accessibility standards to all corporate solicitation templates to ensure that templates are easily understood by anyone who might use them. Changes include formatting improvements and clarifying instructions.
- 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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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- A pilot program to test plain language procurement and contract wording.

5) How does the new British Columbia Procurement Plan (the Plan) differ from the previous British Columbia Procurement Strategy (2018)?

- The Plan addresses the impacts of public sector procurement on three key groups – suppliers, buyers, and the people in 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 British Columbia Procurement Strategy (2018)?

- After seeking the input and advice of Indigenous partners, the External Advisory Committee (the Committee) was formed in late 2022, including representation from First Nations, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities, organizations, and businesses. The Committee provides advice and recommendations to the Province on increasing Indigenous Peoples' participation in

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provincial procurement opportunities.

- In the fall of 2023, we released an interim update to provide background about the Indigenous Procurement Initiative, the formation of the Committee, and report on progress and next steps.
- Launched the BC Impact Procurement project in 2022, a multi-year pilot project that will test a broadened scope of government's social impact purchasing guidelines and guidelines for environmentally responsible procurement.
- This 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 the people in B.C.
- 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.
- In May 2022, we 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 the Ministry of Citizens' Services on how to put social impact principles into practice.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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- Rolled out Indigenous cultural competency training to B.C. Government employees who deliver procurement and contract management.

7) You say that the Province spends \$7 billion on goods and services – what do you buy?

- Each year, the Province spends an estimated \$7 billion 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 Information Technology 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 Purchasing 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.
- Social impact purchasing allows us to do more for people and communities when we spend public dollars.
- The Province's Social Impact Purchasing Guidelines provide

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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clarity on how government ministries can consider social value when purchasing services with a total value under \$75,000 and goods under \$10,000.

- 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, 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 British Columbia Procurement Plan (2024) and the previous British Columbia Procurement Strategy (2018) 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 already spend on goods, services, and Information Technology is 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 procurements.
- Our procurement specialists are trained to put social procurement principles into practice, and we have rolled out

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Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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Indigenous 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 the people in B.C.

Contact:

Teresa Hartman	A/Executive Director	Procurement and Supply Division	778-676-0847
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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 stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink.

Honourable Lisa Beare
Minister of Citizens' Services



Contents

2

Land Acknowledgment

3

Minister's Message

5

Introduction

7

How We Got Here

9

Where We're Going

10

The Missions

11

Mission 1:
Leverage purchasing power

Government calls to action

How we're supporting
these actions

13

Mission 2:
Increase supplier access

Government calls to action

How we're supporting
these actions

15

Mission 3:
Build capacity

Government calls to action

How we're supporting
these actions

17

Putting the plan into action

18

**What to expect over
the next 12-18 months**

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

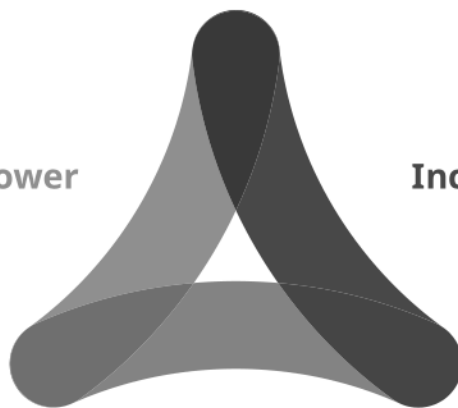
By using procurement as a strategic lever for change, this plan aligns with government priorities, including Stronger BC, CleanBC Roadmap to 2030, and implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

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 January 17, 2025.

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 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.

We can help in over 220 languages and through other accessible options. [Call, email or text us](#), or [find a service centre](#)

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: Facts and Figures - Service BC and Government Digital Experience

Revised: Date of last revision, January 14, 2025

Background

- Through a provincial network of 65 service centres, the Provincial Contact Centre and government's web platforms (for example, gov.bc.ca), Service BC and Government Digital Experience provides over 300 government services on behalf of more than 40 ministries and agencies, making it easier for the public and businesses to interact with government.
- All data and statistics reflect January 1 - December 31, 2024.

Service BC Centres

- 65 Service BC Centre locations throughout the province and 2 mobile centres providing services to remote and rural areas.
- Citizen Satisfaction Rate (2023 bi-annual survey results): 97 percent
- Over 1.9 million interactions with the public in 2024, including more than 10,000 through the mobile and community outreach program, and 715,000 through the send video verification program.
- In 2024, the ministry supported the province's emergency response efforts by sending staff to resiliency centres in Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Prince George, Quesnel, Kaslo, Castlegar and Armstrong to assist those impacted by wildfires.

This material will be proactively released.

Page 1 of 4

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

BC Services Card

- There are just under 5.3 million active physical cards in circulation, including more than 1.4 million new cards issued in 2024.
- There were more than 2.5 million unique users actively engaged with the BC Services Card application.
- In 2024, there were 779,000 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 4.5/5 year-over-year rating, and a Google Play rating of 3.4/5.
- In 2024, 26 government services were onboarded using service card for authentication, bringing the total to 101.
- 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 from the public handled by Provincial Contact Centre: just under 2.4 million, including 97,000 accessing the verify by video service via a digital channel
- Citizen Satisfaction Rate (2023 bi-annual survey results): 85 percent
- Interpretation services available in over 220 languages.

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Service channel offerings: telephone, email, verify by video, webchat, and SMS text
- Average number of calls handled per month: 171,000
- Historically supported programs: 40

BC Registries

- Business Satisfaction Rate (2023 bi-annual survey results): 75 percent
- Corporate Registry transactions processed for 2024: 808,000
- Total calls answered by staff in 2024: 122,000
- Current number of active entities supported as of December 31, 2024:
 - Corporations: 626,000
 - Societies: 33,000
 - Cooperatives: 765
 - Sole Proprietorships: 739,000
 - General Partnerships: 134,000
 - Benefit Companies: 1,086
- Personal Property Registry Transactions (including lien search) in 2024: over 1.8 million
- Manufactured Home requests (including search requests) in 2024: 88,000
- Total business name requests received for examination in 2024: 189,000

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Web Analytics

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

In 2024:

- The main government site had about 139.8 million page views.
- June was the highest month with 13.2 million page views, driven by "Taxes and tax credits" theme related content.
- The "Health" theme related content was the highest overall in 2024 with 17.3 million page views.

Contact:

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This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 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, February 11, 2025

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.
- We continually explore and implement new technology to make it easier for people in B.C. to access government services regardless of where they live.
- 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 Telephone Device for the Deaf, a relay service for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have trouble with speech.
- Service BC offers interpretation services in over 220 languages to better respond to the diverse communities we serve.

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

People in remote communities

- **Service BC's Mobile Service is designed to improve access for people living in remote and underserved communities by bringing services directly to them.**
- **Mobile Service Centre vans are designed to be welcoming, inclusive and accessible to everyone.**
- **The Mobile Service Centres are equipped with hearing loops for those who are hard of hearing.**
- **To support people entering the vans, there is an additional exterior step and two wall grab bars.**
- **For those who are unable to step into the vans, the Mobile Service Centres have attached, heated tents to ensure everyone can obtain access to government services.**
- **In communities where there is no connectivity, the Mobile Service Centres are 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.**

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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 use the BC Token.
- 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 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 Centres.
- 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 Centres.
- The Service BC Provincial Contact Centre handled approximately 2.4 million interactions over the last year, providing information and navigation support for more than 300 government services.

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2025/26 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, Insurance Corporation of British Columbia for online auto insurance renewals and claims, and federal services such as the Canada Revenue Agency's, My Account portal.
- In 2024, the BC Services Card App launched 26 new services including the Future Skills Grant; where eligible people in B.C. can apply for grants and track applications; the Secondary Suite Incentive Program that offers up to \$40,000 for secondary suite construction; and My BC Housing that provides access to a range of programs from homeless shelters to housing subsidies.
- 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 Centres are designed to deliver services directly to people in communities throughout B.C. who face barriers to service.
- The services offered through the Service BC Mobile Service Centres are comparable to what you find in any other Service BC

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Centre including Driver Licensing Services, Photo BC Services Cards and BCID Photo cards.

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 Centres are a new service channel that brings services to communities facing barriers (for example, 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 use the BC Token.
- In 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 free of charge by visiting any Service BC centre, enables secure access online along with a username and password.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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 use the app to access online services.
- 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 Centres 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 interpretation services in over 220 different languages.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Service BC also makes every effort possible to assist the people in B.C. who need an interpreter to help them during an in-person visit to a Service Centre.

7) How is Service BC responding to the 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 (for example, issue resolution, going the extra mile, timely help, and ease of access).

Contact:

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This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: Mobile Service

Revised: Date of last revision, January 27, 2025

Key Messages:

- The Province is committed to providing people in B.C. with improved access to the support and services they count on.
- This includes looking at the many ways people interact with government – by telephone, online and in-person – and reviewing where Service BC can implement new technology to make it easier for people in B.C. to access government services, regardless of where they live.
- Service BC's Mobile Service 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, and the United Way to provide comprehensive service delivery.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- **There are two types of Mobile Services that Service BC offers:**
 - **Community Outreach which provides non-photo ID services and informational services to communities.**
 - **Mobile Service Centre vans which mirror most services of an in-person Service BC Centre. One of the vans is equipped to provide photo ID services.**

Questions and Answers:

1) How many Mobile Service events have been held as of December 31, 2024?

- Answer: 132 events

2) Where have these events taken place?

- Events have been held in Anacra, Ahousaht (a-howz-at), Bella Coola, Chetwynd, Courtenay, Cowichan, Duncan, Canal Flats, Cache Creek, Cayoose Creek, Campbell River, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Fraser Lake, Gitanmaax (git-an-max), Hazelton, Hagwilgit (hag-wil-get), Kamloops, Kispiox (kiss-pea-ox), Lillooet, Nanaimo, New Westminster, McBride, MacLeod Lake, Penticton, Penelakut (pen-el-a-cut), Prince George, Riondel, Richmond, Glen Vowell (also known as Sik-E-dakh), Squamish, Tofino, Tumbler Ridge, Ucluelet, Vernon, Victoria, Abbotsford, Langley, Vancouver, Hope, Maple Ridge, Surrey, Sidney, Hornby Island, Parksville, Sooke, Port Alberni, Bamfield, Chemainus, Trail and Kimberley.

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2025/26 Estimates Note

Advice to the Minister

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

3) Which Indigenous communities have received Mobile Service visits?

- McLeod Lake Indian Band, Sekw'el'was (also known as Cayoose Creek (kai-yuse creek) Band), T'it'q'et (tilth-kit) First Nation, Ahousaht (a-howz-at) First Nation, Squamish (squa-mish) Nation, Stz'uminus (sha-main-us) First Nation (also known as Chemainus First Nation), Huu-ay-aht (ho-ay-at) First Nations, Tseshaht (say-shot) First Nation, Ditidaht (dee-tee-dot) First Nation (formerly known as Nitinaht First Nation), Glen Vowell (also known as Sik-E-Dakh), Hagwilget (hag-wil-get) Village Council, Kispiox (kiss-pea-ox) Band, Gitanmaax (git-n-max) Band, Malahat Nation, Ts'uubaa-asatx (tsoo-bah-seht) Nation (formerly known as Lake Cowichan First Nation), Skeetchestn (ski-chas-ten) Indian Band, Lyackson (lye-ack-son) First Nation, Halalt (hull-alt) First Nation, Penelakut (pen-el-a-cut) Tribe, Heiltsuk (helts-uk) Nation (formerly known as Bella Bella Indian Band), Tsawout (say-out) First Nation, Tsartlip (sart-lip) First Nation, Uchucklesaht (u-chuk-les-at) Tribe, Songhees (song-geez) Nation, T'Sou-ke (tsa-awk) Nation, Esquimalt (es-kwai-malt) Nation, Pauquachin (paw-kwi-chin) First Nation, Nee-Tahi-Buhn (knee-tie-boon) Indian Band, Skin Tyee (skin-tye-ee) Nation, Lake Babine (lake-babeen) Nation (also known as Nat'oo'ten (nad-oo-ten) Nation), Cheslatta (chess-la-ta) Carrier Nation, Takla (tack-lah) First Nation, Tl'azt'en (tlaz-den) Nation, Yekooche (yeh-koo-chee) First Nation, Tsay Keh Dene (say-kay-denay) Nation, Kwadacha (kwa-da-chuh) Nation (also known as Fort Ware), Lax Kw'alaams (lacks-qwah-lambs) Band, Gitanyow (git-n-yow), Witset (wit-set) First Nation (formerly known as Moricetown), Gitwangak (git-wan-gawk) Band,

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Gitsegukla (gits-a guk-la) First Nation and Sc'ianew (chea-nuh) First Nation (also known as Beecher Bay First Nation).

4) How are locations and dates for Mobile Service determined?

- Service BC considers a number of factors such as access to services, vulnerable communities, remoteness, service partners availability (for example, Service Canada) and support during emergencies or natural disasters.

5) What services are delivered at Mobile Service events?

- Mobile Service 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 certificate applications and other non-photo ID services, information, address changes, and take payments. One Mobile Service Centre van is equipped to provide photo ID services.
- 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 Canada Revenue Agency.

6) Can Mobile Services support disaster response?

- Yes, in situations where people cannot access a Service BC centre due to a natural disaster or other emergency, Mobile Service can be set up to support people by providing access to government

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

services by working collaboratively with the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness.

- As of December 31, 2024, Mobile Services have supported 10 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 Support Services through the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness at Sumas (sue-mas) First Nation.

Contact:

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2025/26 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 22, 2025

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 and accessed through one digital platform (SBC Connect) safely and securely provides people with improved response times, more service selection and greater, more convenient access when needed.
- This work aligns with the Minister's mandate letter commitments to "ensure programs remain relevant, are efficient, and improve the experience of British Columbians who engage with government for the delivery of services" and so "it's easier to access government services – using effective engagement with key partners and aggressive innovation in cost-effective technology and citizen-oriented processes."

Digital verification

- People can use BC Services Mobile App – one of the most trusted forms of online identification – to digitally verify their identity. Users can also provide a notarized affidavit with a BCeID login and a one-time passcode.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- **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 any Service BC Office.**
- **Verified Sole Proprietors can now use a Digital Business Card to facilitate verifiable digital access when acquiring connected business services, like business licenses in the City of Vancouver.**
- **Our identification requirements help other businesses and agencies, such as banks and other government programs, trust the BC Registries 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?

- **From January 2019 to December 2023:**
 - **Business name requests and name examinations were modernized, and access to legacy systems turned off.**
 - **The business registry was established for benefit companies, co-operatives, sole proprietorships and general partnerships and access to OneStop BC turned off.**
 - **The Personal Property Registry was modernized and access to the legacy system turned off.**

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- In 2024:
 - A modernized annual report filing was launched for a limited number of B.C. corporations. This service is being expanded to wider audiences to help businesses transition to the modernized service.
 - After steady development and incremental improvements, the final stages of the Manufactured Home Registry were modernized, and access to the legacy system turned off.
 - In response to recent amendments to the Securities Act, introduced new filings in the Personal Property Registry to register, amend and discharge a Securities Act Notice.
- January 2025:
 - A limited launch for B.C. corporations allows new businesses to be incorporated in the business registry, accessed through the digital SBC Connect platform. This was aimed at new users to collect feedback and improve the system before the full launch in March 2025.

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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- For the business registry, verifying the identity of the person improves business transparency and provides greater assurances to the people of B.C. as to who the directors of an organization are.
- People in B.C. have a right to know who owns a business operating in this province.
- 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 digital services?

- The Province's Identity Information Management program is responsible for providing identity and authentication services to support people in B.C.'s transactions with government services.
- BC Registries, in collaboration with the Identity Information Management program, has developed a solution for non-B.C. 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.

Contact:

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This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 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, March 03, 2025

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 is working to establish a Beneficial Ownership Registry, the "Registrar's Transparency Register", in 2025 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.
- 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, B.C. 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.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Questions and Answers:

1) Who owns the legislation and the program?

- Ministry of Finance owns the Business Corporations Act except the provisions of the Act as they relate to the establishment and operation of the Corporate Registry which includes the Beneficial Ownership Registry.
- Ministry of Citizens Services owns the provisions of the Act as they relate to the establishment and operation of the Corporate Registry which includes the Beneficial Ownership Registry.

2) Why is this needed?

- More than 200 jurisdictions have signed up to implement the 40 recommendations from the Cullen Commission on anti-money laundering and protection against terrorist financing.
- This system will meet the recommendation of the Cullen Commission to address the risk of money laundering and terrorist activity financing in British Columbia.

3) How many businesses will be impacted?

- It is estimated that 1 million incorporated B.C. companies (excluding sole proprietorships) will require registration via the Beneficial Ownership Registry.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

4) How much will it cost?

- Registries has secured \$8 million in capital funding from the Digital Investment Office 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 are being 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.

5) How much work has been done?

- BC Registries started service design on the Beneficial Ownership Registry (the Registry) in fall 2022 and has sourced a complete agile development team.
- Enabling legislation to establish the Registry was passed in spring 2023, Cabinet Confidences
Cabinet Confidences
- 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 Registrar's Transparency Register.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- August 2024: Delivery of the beneficial ownership filing that allows a person, business or legal professional to file sensitive information in a secure, authenticated manner.
- December 2024: Completion of an advanced search system that allows enforcement agencies to investigate companies by providing detailed information on beneficial owners, directors, key individuals, and business relationships supporting anti-money laundering efforts.

6) Will the Beneficial Ownership Registry be integrated with the federal registry or other jurisdictions?

- B.C. continues to work with the several Canadian jurisdictions and federal government bodies, like the Canadian Revenue Agency, Fintrac and the Federal Corporate Registry to ensure project alignment and future data sharing possibilities.
- B.C.'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:

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2025/26 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, February 11, 2025

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 Accommodation 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 10, 2025, RPD's real estate portfolio was comprised of:

	Buildings (#)	Area (m²)	Proportion of Space (%)
Owned	469	752,274	48.2
Leased	575	566,398	36.3
Maintained	512	241,179	15.5
Total	1,556	1,559,851	100.0

- Additionally, RPD manages 255 land parcels, totaling 522.57 hectares.
- RPD's real estate portfolio is serviced by Coldwell Banker Richard Ellis Ltd (CBRE), as well as landlords, and public-private partnership (P3) providers.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Budget Summary

- Real Property Division's capital plan directly supports government's Budget 2025 priorities, as follows:
 - Capital investments that support the Province's priority commitments, such as ministry client programming requirements (e.g. Public Safety and Solicitor General, Ministry of Attorney General), and Hybrid Work Strategy initiatives.
 - Maintaining building 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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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Real Property

(\$ millions)	2024/25 Budget (Restated)^	2025/26 Budget	Change
Nanaimo Correctional Centre	\$7.96	\$1.04	(\$6.92)
Central Heating Plant	\$15.00	\$10.00	(\$5.00)
Strategic Acquisitions of Buildings	\$8.01	\$6.35	(\$1.66)
TI's for Buildings acquired under Strategic Acquisitions	\$16.20	\$7.00	(\$9.20)
Energy Smart Program (CleanBC)	\$7.32	\$2.14	(\$5.18)
Courthouse Improvements	\$11.98	\$9.03	(\$2.95)
Vancouver Law Courts Renovation	\$11.34	\$8.37	(\$2.97)
Port Coquitlam Law Courts Renovation	\$21.92	\$21.79	(\$0.12)
BC Corrections Segregation Strategy Renovations	\$0.68	\$0.00	(\$0.68)
BC Corrections Accommodation Strategy	\$5.61	\$1.11	(\$4.49)
SDPR Risk Review Related TI's	\$5.26	\$2.03	(\$3.23)
PSSG Land Acquisitions	\$0.70	\$0.00	(\$0.70)
Office Furniture	\$0.58	\$0.50	(\$0.08)
Routine Capital	\$66.70	\$97.24	\$30.54
	\$179.25^	\$166.61	(\$12.64)

^ The Ministry of Infrastructure was established when the new government was announced on November 18, 2024. As a result, Plant and Animal Health (CPS # LCTZSSA0861) project was transferred from the Ministry of Citizens' Services (CITZ) to the Ministry of Infrastructure (INF), under OIC 596.

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 will allow under-utilized spaces to be dropped from the portfolio.
- The primary goals of consolidation are to:
 - Reduce the size and increase the value of the real estate portfolio, leading to:
 - Financial savings through lease drops.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Lower utility costs.
- Investment in strategic, high-quality properties.
- Provide modern, technology-supported, inclusive, and fully accessible work settings.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- A 1 percent reduction in office space, equivalent to 7,000 m², could potentially reduce greenhouse gas emissions by between 90 to 120 metric tons of CO₂ annually, particularly in fossil fuel-consuming buildings. That's the same as taking 27 to 36 cars off the road. This contributes to Real Property Division's legislated target of a 50 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Stewarding Government Building Assets (including Accessibility)

- A Capital Planning Management System, containing data from Facility Condition Assessments, is used to gauge the integrity of the government real estate portfolio.
- Investments are made after considering multiple criteria such as condition of the building, including the building's mechanical and electrical systems, seismic conditions, functionality, feedback from clients, deferred maintenance/repairs required, current and future utilization, etc.
- In 2024, the aggregate Facility Condition Index (FCI) for the building portfolio was 0.58, a slight increase from 0.56 in 2023. FCI is a metric for measuring the condition of a building or portfolio. It is made up of the total cost of any deferred maintenance in a specific asset divided by that asset's replacement value. FCI provides an outlook of the current and near-future needs of an asset. A lower FCI indicates better condition than a high FCI.

This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- 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 \$5.7 million has been planned for accessibility improvements (\$3.4 million in FY 2024/25 and \$2.3 million in FY 2025/26).
- RPD contributes to carbon reduction goals through energy conservation and greenhouse gas reductions. In FY2023/24, the RPD portfolio had reduced 44 percent greenhouse gas emissions over the 2010 baseline levels.

Property Dispositions

- Real Property Division (RPD) identifies assets that are surplus to government needs and works with the ministries of Housing and Municipal Affairs, Transportation and Transit, Finance, and Infrastructure, to ensure the highest and best use of all government real estate assets in a way that promotes the cost effectiveness of the administration of government services and the interests of British Columbians.
- RPD follows a robust Enhanced Referral Process that provides an opportunity for surplus provincial properties to be repurposed by other ministries and the Broader Public Sector to advance government priorities. Engagement and consultation with First Nations and local governments is part of the disposition process.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: Optimizing the Office Space Portfolio

Revised: Date of last revision, January 16, 2025

Key Messages:

- Today's workforce is increasingly mobile, supported by new technological tools in flexible and/or remote workspaces, resulting in engaged and productive workers.
- In the BC Public Service (BCPS), 65.6 percent of employees have an approved telework agreement and on average employees spend 3 days/week in the office (Public Service Agency, December 2024).
- In 2024, the Ministry of Citizens' Services launched the Hybrid Workplace Strategy with goals to:
 - Optimize office space and ensure efficient and effective use of government's office space portfolio by utilizing government owned buildings and strategic leases.
 - Reduce the size and increase the value of the real estate portfolio, leading to:
 - Financial savings through lease drops,
 - Lower utility costs, and
 - Investing in strategic, high-quality properties.
 - Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Support regional and rural employee hiring.
 - Enable employee attraction and retention, making the BCPS a leading employer of choice.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Questions and Answers:

1) What steps are being taken to advance the initiatives and directives that are identified in the Minister of Citizens' Services current Mandate Letter?

- The ministry's Real Property Division has been working on many initiatives to optimize the use of government properties and enhance cost-savings to government:
 - In 2024, a strategic review was completed to identify underutilized or surplus assets that could be repurposed for housing. The BC Builds pilot project in Kamloops is one example. The best use of surplus real estate assets will be determined in conjunction with the Ministries of Finance, Housing and Municipal Affairs, Infrastructure and Transportation and Transit.
 - In Victoria, real estate assets were analyzed to determine the best strategic owned and leased buildings to retain in alignment with the Hybrid Workplace Strategy.
 - Several projects are underway to consolidate staff into strategic locations and divest underutilized spaces.

2) What is the point of the Hybrid Workplace Strategy?

- The Hybrid Workplace Strategy optimizes the use of government's office space portfolio, leading to increased efficiency, reduced costs and reduction of environmental impact, while also supporting flexible work and regional hiring strategies.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- My ministry is working collaboratively with individual ministries to understand business function needs and is leading the planning for space utilization that aligns with the goals of the Hybrid Workplace Strategy.
- Planning continues to be developed to optimize the office space portfolio 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, allowing under-utilized spaces to be dropped from the portfolio.

3) Are you actively reducing your lease portfolio?

- Yes, there are several projects underway, with the initial focus on Victoria, to significantly reduce the leased portfolio. The Hybrid Workplace Strategy will take time to implement and will generally align with existing lease expiries.
- 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.

4) Will there be savings to government with this change?

- Yes, each consolidation opportunity is evaluated to establish projected costs and expected savings from reduced leases.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- The full implementation of the Hybrid Workplace Strategy will take time as it needs to align with existing lease expiries which are typically on a five-year cycle.

5) 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 connections, ministry staff can access government's network and conduct their business.
- With the successful adoption of MS Teams to keep government connected, further information technology 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 Hybrid Workplace Strategy, we're using several new workspace management technologies across the BC Public Service that will help facilitate higher utilization of our spaces and provide better user experience for staff when working at the office. These include items such as a corporate workspace booking application.

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.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- Leased space not required will be turned back to the landlords as and when the leases expire.

7) What other policy considerations and social impacts does the optimization of office space affect?

- Optimization of office spaces aligns with Gender-based Analysis Plus principles, promoting diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and equity in workplace location, configurations, and technology.
- Optimization of office space supports the BC Public Service in being a modern, competitive employer committed to employee well-being and work-life balance.
- Optimization of office space aligns with the "triple bottom line" objectives, providing financial benefits, improving social aspects like collaboration, and contributing to environmental sustainability.

8) What other forms will consolidation take?

- Some examples of consolidations include:
 - The Ministry of Citizens' Services integration of several existing locations into a central ministry hub. This will result in vacating multiple spaces and include a more efficient allocation of over 1,500 employees to a building that previously supported 1,000 employees.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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- The Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills in Victoria is consolidating staff into a hybrid workplace at St. Ann's Academy, achieving a 40 percent reduction in space.
- A strategic portfolio review will highlight key consolidations to pursue.

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This material will be proactively released.

2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

Title: Prince George Youth Custody Centre Future Use

Revised: Date of last revision, March 24, 2025

Key Messages:

- The Ministry of Citizens' Services oversees government-owned properties.
- The Province announced on November 16, 2023, that the Prince George Youth Custody Services program, located at the 1211 Gunn Road facility, was closing effective March 31, 2024.
- The Ministry of Children and Family Development continues to temporarily operate with a reduced floorplan using the main building until a permanent solution is found for the interim holding of youth.
- 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 working with our client ministries to align program needs with Provincial real estate.
- We will look at options for a new use from groups within government and will consult with local First Nations and engage in discussions with the City of Prince George on a new opportunity for the site.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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.)	Year 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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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

2) What have been the previous expenditures of the 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:

Fiscal Year	Expenditures
2018/19	\$ 1,347,502
2019/20	\$ 1,088,445
2020/21	\$ 908,162
2021/22	\$ 936,569
2022/23	\$ 1,055,385
2023/24	\$ 1,094,065

3) Are there plans to utilize the vacant space while the Ministry of Children and Family Development temporarily occupies the main building?

- 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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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

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?

- Questions regarding the Northern Centre of Excellence for Children and Youth should be directed to the Ministry of Health.
- While my ministry is responsible for the existing facility, future government programming is the responsibility of client ministries.
- My ministry works with clients to align real estate requirements with programmatic needs.
- As planning advances, my ministry will engage with local First Nations and the City of Prince George.

5) Other organizations have expressed interest in being able to utilize the facility, can they take occupancy of the former youth centre?

- 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 Enhanced Referral Process, which matches ministry and agency demands with existing surplus properties.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

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

- These options and business case(s) will be brought forward for government's final consideration.
- If it is determined that the best use of the facility is outside of government, my ministry will engage with local First Nations, and the City of Prince George as part of the process.

6) When will you announce the new use?

- We recognize the community interest in knowing the new use and government will announce the plans after discussions have been completed and final programming is approved.

7) Has any party expressed interest in the asset?

- The Province is facilitating discussions with other government ministries/agencies, local First Nations, and the City of Prince George on the future use of the facility.

8) Will you use it to ease over-crowded correctional facilities?

- Questions regarding corrections should be directed to the Ministry responsible - Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

9) Would you sell the property?

- If there are no opportunities to repurpose the property within government, a sale of the facility could be considered.
- If a decision to sell the property is made, my ministry will consult with local First Nations and the City of Prince George as part of the process.

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2025/26 Estimates Note Advice to the Minister

Ministry: Ministry of Citizens' Services
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10) What is the property value of the land and buildings?

- As of July 1, 2024, BC Assessment has assessed the property at \$8.08 million.

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 the Ministry of Children and Family Development close the Youth Custody Services program?

- My ministry is responsible for enabling our client's program/service delivery through the provision of necessary real estate needs. The Minister of Children and Family Development would be best positioned to respond to this question as it is specific to program delivery.

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