

Estimate Notes 2024/2025

Minister Sheila Malcolmson



CONFIDENTIAL

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Program Notes 2024/2025

Table of Contents

#	Title	Division
1	Annual Service Plan Report 2022-23	CSD
2	Ministry 2024-25 Service Plan	CSD
Budget		
3	Blue Book Pages	CSD
4	Minister's Mandate Letter	CSD
5	Minister's Office Budget	CSD
6	Ministry Budget - CLBC	CSD
7	Ministry Budget and FTE Overview	CSD
8	Ministry Budget - Income Assistance	CSD
9	Ministry Budget - Shared Recovery Mandate	CSD
10	Ministry Budget - WorkBC	CSD
Community Living British Columbia (CLBC)		
11	CLBC - Budget and Programs (FTEs)	CLBC
12	CLBC - Home Sharing Program	CLBC
13	CLBC - Re-Imagining Community Inclusion Work Plan	CLBC
14	CLBC - Impact of MCFD changes	CLBC
15	CLBC - Housing	CLBC
16	CLBC - Service Provider Compensation, Recruitment and Retention	CLBC
Key Topics		
Corporate Services Division		
17	Social Service Sector Roundtable	CSD
18	Year-End Grants	CSD
Service Delivery Division		
19	Service Delivery - Budget and FTE overview	SDD
20	Service Delivery - Community Services	SDD
21	Service Delivery - Contact Centres	SDD
22	Homelessness - Community Integration Services	SDD
23	Intake and Eligibility	SDD
24	Refugee Supports	SDD/ELMSD
Accessibility Directorate		
25	<i>Accessible B.C. Act</i> Implementation	Acc Dir
26	Accessibility Investments	Acc Dir
27	Accessibility Standards Development	Acc Dir
28	Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility	Acc Dir
29	Accessible BC Regulation	Acc Dir
30	Compliance and Enforcement	Acc Dir

Research, Innovation and Policy Division		
31	Federal Programs: CPP & CPP-D	RIPD
32	Supplements: General, Health & Crisis	RIPD
33	Earnings Exemptions	RIPD
34	Income and Disability Assistance Rates	RIPD
35	Declaration Act and Reconciliation Overview	RIPD
36	2024 Poverty Reduction Strategy Act and Legislation”	RIPD
37	Overdose Crisis	RIPD
38	Mandate Letter Commitments: Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits	RIPD
39	Supports for non-profits	
40	Residential Facilities	RIPD/SDD
41	On-Reserve Supports	RIPD
42	Homelessness Initiatives	RIPD
43	Food Security	RIPD
44	Immigration/Refugees	RIPD
45	Canada Dental Care Program	RIPD
46	Canada Disability Benefit	RIPD
47	Spousal Rates	RIPD
48	Inflation	RIPD
Employment and Labour Market Services Division		
49	Community and Employer Partnerships (CEP)	ELMSD
50	Labour Market Transfer Agreements – LMDA & WDA	ELMSD
51	Services to Indigenous Peoples	ELMSD
52	Services to Persons with Disabilities (PWD)	ELMSD
53	Single Parent Employment Initiative	ELMSD
54	WorkBC Overview and Results	ELMSD
55	WorkBC Employment Services – Communities in Transition	ELMSD
56	Apprenticeship Services	ELMSD
57	Skills Training and Financial Supports Expansion	ELMSD
58	Care Economy	ELMSD
59	Financial Model and Contractor Compensation	ELMSD
60	Employability Planning	ELMSD
61	Top up	ELMSD
Information Services Division		
62	ICM Systems’ Performance	ISD
63	Flexibility in number of payments per month for benefit recipients	ISD

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

2022/23 Annual Service Plan Report

August 2023



For more information on the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, please contact us at:

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC
V8W 9R2

1-866-866-0800

Or visit our website at: www.gov.bc.ca/SDPR

Published by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's 2022/23 Annual Service Plan Report compares the Ministry's actual results to the expected results identified in the 2022/23 – 2024/25 Service Plan published in 2022. I am accountable for those results as reported.

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'SM', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Honourable Sheila Malcolmson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
August 4, 2023

Table of Contents

Minister's Accountability Statement	3
Letter from the Minister	5
Purpose of the Annual Service Plan Report	7
Strategic Direction	7
Purpose of the Ministry	7
Operating Environment.....	9
Report on Performance: Goals, Objectives, and Results	10
Financial Report	17
Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations.....	18
Appendix B: Progress on Mandate Letter Priorities.....	19

Letter from the Minister

As the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, I am pleased to present the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 2022/23 Annual Service Plan Report, which summarizes our work and key results from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023.

Our government wants all people in British Columbia, regardless of race, gender or physical ability, to have the opportunity to participate in their community, feel valued, and share in the prosperity of our province.

Reducing poverty is a key government commitment and we have been working hard so that everyone in B.C. can live full and dignified lives. We made it through the pandemic by putting people first and implementing the largest-ever increase to income and disability assistance rates.

We worked to update our Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2022/23 through far-reaching public engagement. Over 10,000 people shared their lived experience of poverty directly with us.

We want people to have the support they need to get by and to have access to nutritious food. So, in March 2023, we strengthened food security initiatives through a historic \$49 million allocation, and we continue to work with community organizations to help families and people challenged to put good food on the table.

In October 2023, government passed an important milestone in its implementation of the [Accessible BC Act](#) by meeting all three requirements in Part 3 of the Act: establishing a [Provincial Accessibility Committee](#), an [Accessibility Plan](#), and a [Feedback Mechanism](#) for people in B.C. to provide input about accessibility in government programs and services.

People across the province continue to benefit from the Accessibility Grants program. In December 2022, twelve B.C. non-profit organizations received provincial grants to support community-based projects that advance accessibility and inclusion.

We all want people to get the supports, services and training they need, in every part of our province, to build better lives. In October 2022, we increased living and financial supports for people receiving training and work experience through WorkBC. By providing funding to help offset transportation or childcare costs, more people were able to get the training they needed to land good jobs.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have continued to have a disproportionate effect on the non-profit sector, so through the Non-Profit Recovery and Resiliency Fund, we strengthened their critical work through a \$60 million year-end funding grant.

Every day, we're working hard to make people's lives better. I am grateful for the hard work of all ministry staff who are helping to build a better, more inclusive and accessible B.C. for all.



Honourable Sheila Malcolmson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
August 4, 2023

Purpose of the Annual Service Plan Report

This annual service plan report has been developed to meet the requirements of the [Budget Transparency and Accountability Act](#) (BTAA), which sets out the legislative framework for planning, reporting and accountability for government organizations. Under the BTAA, the Minister is required to report on the actual results of the ministry's performance related to the forecasted targets stated in the service plan for the reported year.

Strategic Direction

The strategic direction set by government in 2020 and the ministry's [2020 Mandate Letter](#) shaped the goals, objectives, performance measures and financial plan outlined in the [Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 2022/23 – 2024/25 Service Plan](#) and the actual results reported on in this annual report.

Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) is focused on reducing poverty, creating opportunities and increasing inclusion. The purpose of the ministry is to provide quality services for British Columbians in need, to ensure that everyone can participate fully in their community and to reach their full potential.

SDPR is guided by five pieces of legislation: the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#), the [Employment and Assistance Act](#), the [Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act](#), the [Poverty Reduction Strategy Act](#) and the [Community Living Authority Act](#). The Minister is responsible for [Community Living BC](#) (CLBC) and is supported by the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits and the Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility. The ministry's key priorities were named in the minister's 2022 mandate letter:

- Updating the [TogetherBC: BC's Poverty Reduction Strategy](#), to continue reducing the number of people, and in particular children, who are in poverty in B.C.
- Leading work with the Ministry of Finance to continue addressing impacts on low-income people caused by cost-of-living increases related to global inflation.
- Leading work on food security and dignified access to food in partnerships with food producers, grocery stores, food banks, schools, and non-profits, with support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, including recognizing the impacts of global inflation and extreme weather events on household food security for British Columbians.
- Supporting the work of the Ministry of Housing to better coordinate services to deliver improved outcomes for people living in Vancouver's Downtown East side, in collaboration with the Ministries of Mental Health and Addictions, Health, and Public Safety and Solicitor General, as well as Indigenous Peoples, external partners and others.
- Ensuring the voices of people living with disabilities are heard in all policy development.

- Engaging advocates, communities, and businesses to ensure the new Accessible British Columbia Act is well understood and effective at making B.C. more accessible and inclusive for everyone – including the implementation of accessible service delivery and employment accessibility standards.

Further to the above, two key priorities for the ministry (outside mandate letters) are:

- Leading collaborative engagement through the [Social Services Sector Roundtable](#) to help strengthen the important community social services that people count on every day.
- Through [Community Living BC](#), continuing the work on the [Re-imagining Community Inclusion Initiative](#) and the [Re-imagining Community Inclusion Work Plan](#) to improve services for adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

Operating Environment

The ministry provided income and disability assistance to an average of 224,000 people each month in 2022/23, including 120,000 people with the Persons with Disabilities designation and 45,000 dependent children. In 2023, updated poverty related statistics became available for 2021. It showed that poverty statistics for 2021 worsened compared to 2020 as COVID-related government supports expired. The number of British Columbians living in poverty in 2021 increased by 65,000 to 447,000 according to the Market Basket Measure.¹ This includes 70,000 children living in low-income families and 70,000 seniors. Although BC exceeded its legislated poverty reduction targets, B.C. currently has the second highest poverty rate (tied with Manitoba) and the fourth highest child poverty rate in the country.

The increase in the inflation rate in 2022/23 put pressure on low- and middle-income British Columbians to be able to afford necessities. In 2022/23 average prices increased 7% from 2021/22, but even higher growth rates were seen in food purchased from stores (up 10%) and transportation (up 10.1%). High inflation caused more people to turn to food banks as usage increased by over 25% by late-2022. People on income and disability assistance also turned to the ministry for help as the demand for crisis supplements for food increased by 25% in 2022/23 compared to the previous year.

Demographics and Economy

The income assistance caseload is sensitive to demographics and the state of the labour market. In 2022/23 the income assistance caseload increased by 10.8% as the ending of federal covid benefits resulted in more people requiring provincial assistance.

The disability assistance caseload, made up of people who have a disability designation, has continued to grow as the result of longer life expectancies and growing population. The disability assistance caseload increased by 2.1% in 2022/23 compared to 1.5% in the previous year, the lowest growth rate since 1988/89.

British Columbia's economic recovery continued in 2022/23. The number of people unemployed fell by 23%, decreasing the unemployment rate to 4.5% in 2022/23. A strong labour market was key to supporting employable clients to work.

¹ [Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0135-01 Low-income statistics by age, sex and economic family type.](#)

Report on Performance: Goals, Objectives, and Results

Goal 1: Reduce Poverty in British Columbia

Objective 1.1: Implement the cross-government, province-wide Poverty Reduction Strategy

Reducing poverty is a key government commitment. As the lead on British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy, the ministry has continued its work to ensure that the requirements and targets as set out in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Act are achieved.

Key results

- Engaged with over 10,000 people to inform an update of TogetherBC and the BC Employment and Assistance Program.
- In May 2022, created a [Period Poverty Task Force](#) to provide recommendations to government on a long-term approach to period poverty.
- In March 2023, allocated [\\$49 million - including funding to FoodBanks BC and United Way BC](#) - to advance the ministry's food security mandate, especially focussed on infrastructure to redistribute fresh food.
- Implemented a new [Housing Stability Supplement](#) in March 2023, to help prevent homelessness for approximately 3,200 families in B.C. each year.
- Since 2017, SDPR has increased income and disability assistance rates three times with the latest increase in 2022/23 being \$175 a month.
- Effective August 1, 2023, shelter rates will increase by \$125 per case, the first increase to the shelter rate since 2007.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

BC has made many positive strides to reduce poverty in BC in 2022/23, some based on activities by other ministries, such as:

- Minimum wage was indexed to inflation, starting in June 2022, and increased to \$16.75 effective June 1, 2023.
- Introducing mandatory paid sick leave
- Increases to the BC Family Benefit, the introduction of the BC Affordability Credit, and an increase to the Climate Action Tax Credit
- Continued investments in childcare, including reductions in childcare fees.

In 2022/23, in anticipation of the need to update the Province's Poverty Reduction Strategy, we launched a process to co-develop an engagement strategy with Indigenous partners, to ensure alignment with the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#). We also

engaged with ministry income and disability assistance clients, service providers, advocates and staff to understand their needs for the forthcoming strategy update.

SDPR continued to make critical investments to help people in poverty meet their basic needs including food, housing, and menstrual products, and worked with government partners to ensure a cross-ministry approach to poverty reduction. \$750,000 was allocated to the United Way BC to support the Period Poverty Task Force, and to [fund pilot projects](#) that would inform the approach and help address the stigma of poverty. The new [Housing Stability Supplement](#), implemented in March 2023, supports people and families on income assistance to keep their housing when there is a death or temporary absence of a family member from the residence. New Welcome Home Kits launched February 2023, provide household items and essential supplies to people and families as they move into more stable housing.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure ⁴	Baseline 2016 ¹	2021/22 Actual	2023 Target ^{2,3}
1.1a Total Poverty Rate	16.0%	8.8%	12.0%
1.1b Child Poverty Rate	17.4%	7.9%	8.7%

Data source: [Statistics Canada, Table 11-10-0135-01 Low-income statistics by age, sex and economic family type.](#)

¹ The baseline has been revised as the most recent federal data released in May 2023 provides low-income statistics for 2021.

² This performance measure was revised in the latest service plan. For more details on forward-looking planning information, including the performance measures and targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

³ The legislated targets are based on calendar years (not fiscal years) and reflect a 25% reduction for overall poverty and a 50% reduction in child poverty from 2016 data by 2024.

⁴ The lower the percentage is, the better the ministry is doing at meeting/exceeding its target.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act sets out legislated targets for the reduction of both the overall poverty rate (25%) and the poverty rate for children (50%) by 2024. The province uses Statistics Canada’s Market Basket Measure (MBM) as its official poverty measure because it is Canada’s official poverty measure. The federal government has a two-year delay in producing the data since it relies on income tax data.

For these performance measures, the ministry is aiming to reduce the overall and child poverty rates from the 2016 baseline to our legislated target level. As of 2021, the latest poverty data available, B.C. has met both the targets and will continue work to ensure they are met in 2024. The high rate of inflation in 2022 and 2023 put further pressure on poverty rates as prices increased faster than income.

Goal 2: British Columbians in need have services, supports and opportunities that make life better.

Objective 2.1: Deliver reliable, responsive, consistent, accessible, and secure income and disability assistance services.

Delivering modern and consistent service with a focus on reliability, responsiveness and relationship-building remains a key priority. In 2022/23, the ministry continued to expand and improve online self-service options, which increases accessibility of services for clients regardless of their location in British Columbia.

Key results

- In the 2022/23, SDPR improved the quality and responsiveness of income assistance services by considering the diverse needs of clients, such as adding non-binary as a gender option for clients.
- As announced in Budget 2022, the ministry expanded outreach by increasing the number of Community Integration Specialists from 73 to 125 staff, to increase access to in-person services for people at risk or currently experiencing homelessness by connecting them with financial assistance and community resources.
- Implemented three key suggestions from Client Satisfaction Survey during the 2022/23 reporting year.
- Embedded Reconsideration training into core training for all new hires as of the 2022/23 reporting year.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

The ministry continues to adapt its service delivery approach to increase accessibility and to meet the diverse needs of clients. People can access services at 84 physical locations, including 36 ministry offices and 48 Service BC offices around the province. In addition, the ministry improved the digital self-serve options for clients using My Self Serve (MySS), by allowing clients to resubmit their monthly report if information has changed. The ministry also expanded the number of Community Integration Specialists to better support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The ministry's [2021 Client Satisfaction Survey](#) report was posted in early Fall 2022 and the next Client Satisfaction Survey will be implemented Fall 2023. Implementations during the 2022/23 reporting year included improving customer service skills.

The ministry's simplified phone service survey for all callers who contact the ministry through the toll-free number was completed between January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022. Results show that 67% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with the amount of time it took to get service and 86% indicated they found the ministry worker was respectful.

SDPR improved the quality and responsiveness of ministry services through additional training for new hires on how to complete reconsideration packages.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
2.1 Number of clients using My SelfServe ^{1,2}	113,236	101,000	125,551

Data source: Service Delivery Division, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

¹ PM 2.1 targets for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were stated in the 2022/23 service plan as 105,000 and 106,000, respectively. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

² Registered users linked to an active EA case. 2021/2022 as of April 19, 2022 & 2022/2023 as of April 23, 2023

The ministry has exceeded its target for the number of clients using online services. The ministry continued to promote MySS for client easy access when extreme weather events take place throughout the province or other events prevent them from accessing ministry services in-person at a community service office. The ministry has updated the future year targets to reflect this higher usage in 2022/23 and continuing efforts to improve digital self-service options.

Objective 2.2: WorkBC Employment Services clients achieve employment.

Employment helps British Columbians secure income to meet their basic needs, create financial security, and plan for their futures. It also provides people with opportunities for personal growth and building of social connections, while contributing to the economic growth of British Columbia. WorkBC Employment Services play an important role by assisting British Columbians in need to prepare for and find good sustainable jobs.

Key results

- Supported close to 80,000 British Columbians through WorkBC Employment Services, an increase in almost 10,000 people from last year.
- Provided Skills Training and/or Work Experience supports to approximately 7,300 British Columbians.
- Funded 102 community-driven projects focused on increasing employment and work experience opportunities in communities.
- Helped approximately 800 people with disabilities, and/or people who experience significant barriers to employment, gain short-term work experience opportunities through [Work Experience Opportunities Grants](#).

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

In 2022/23, SDPR supported projects that align with the [StrongerBC: Future Ready Action Plan](#), as well as SDPR's poverty reduction plan. Grant funding was provided in 2022/23 for projects to test new methods of employment service delivery to support vulnerable populations,

employers, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Colour (BIPOC), and Persons with Disabilities.

Campaigns were launched in 2022/23 targeting Persons with Disabilities, Immigrants, and income assistance clients, to raise awareness and knowledge of the suite of services available through the network of WorkBC Centres. In 2022/23, 12,700 people with disabilities, 6,000 Indigenous clients and 21,900 immigrants received support through WorkBC, with over 32,700 supported through their first year of employment.

The ministry introduced an automated WorkBC client survey in March 2022 that collects feedback directly from clients at various points in time while they receive employment services. In 2022/23, WorkBC Employment Services achieved a satisfaction score of 75%. This score sets the baseline for the ministry to continue improving employment services in British Columbia and support an inclusive labour market.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
2.2 The number of clients who achieve employment ^{1,2}	14,400	20,000	15,700

Data source: Employment and Labour Market Services Division, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

¹ This performance measure, reporting on clients receiving WorkBC Employment Services (both self-serve and case managed), was replaced in the latest service plan For more details on forward-looking planning information, including the performance measures and targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).² Employment is defined as a full-time job (30 or more hours/week) or a part-time job (when part-time employment is desired; less than 30 hours/week), or self-employment (business is implemented and considered operational), after WorkBC services and/or supports.

As a result of a unique labour market environment, the target for the number of Work BC clients who achieve employment was not reached in 2022/23. The combination of a high number of job vacancies and a tight labour supply in B.C. resulted in an environment where many recently unemployed people could quickly obtain new positions without any assistance. These circumstances meant that many of the clients seeking Work BC services were those who have been out of the workforce since before the pandemic and needed more time and support to become employment ready. To better help these clients, SDPR expanded access to WorkBC Employment Services to include all clients who require a Wage Subsidy, Skills Enhancement or Personal Counselling for Employment Readiness. This ensures more people can get the help they need to successfully attach to the labour market.

Goal 3: Individuals with disabilities live, work and participate in their communities on an equal basis with all British Columbians

Objective 3.1: Support a comprehensive and integrated system of supports and services for individuals with disabilities.

People with disabilities routinely experience barriers that impede their ability to participate fully in their communities. The types of barriers people with disabilities experience varies greatly depending on the nature of their disability and other intersecting factors. Working in the spirit of “Nothing About Us Without Us”, the ministry continued to advance programs and policies that support people with disabilities in British Columbia to meaningfully participate in their communities.

Key results

- Implemented several elements of the Accessible B.C. Act including:
 - Published the [AccessibleBC Plan: B.C.’s Accessibility Plan for 2022/23 to 2024/25](#);
 - Launched the Accessibility Feedback Tool; and
 - Passed the Accessible B.C. regulation to support public sector organizations to develop accessibility plans, committees and feedback tools.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

The ministry continued to work to support the full and equal participation of people with disabilities in their communities. The Accessibility Directorate completed work to implement government’s requirements under Part 3 of the [Accessible BC Act](#) to establish a [Provincial Accessibility Committee](#), an [Accessibility Plan](#), and a [Feedback Mechanism](#) for people in B.C. to provide input about accessibility in government programs and services. Also, in December 2022/23 government launched two technical committees to develop accessibility standards in the areas of Service Delivery and Employment Accessibility.

Using a variety of channels including workshops, community events, and advisory committees, the Accessibility Directorate continued to engage with people with disabilities, families, stakeholders and the business community to identify opportunities to improve the social and economic outcomes of people with disabilities.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2020/21 Baseline	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
3.1 Total amount of earnings exemptions reported by Persons with Disabilities cases ¹	\$129 million	\$156 million	\$180 million	\$178 million

Data source: Research Branch, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

¹ This performance measure was revised in the latest service plan. For more details on forward-looking planning information, including the performance measures and targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

This performance measure tracks how much a person with disabilities can earn before there is an impact on the level of support received from the ministry. The total amount of earnings exempted in 2022/23 by Persons with Disabilities cases reached \$178 million, just under the \$180 million target. The 2022/23 target was not achieved as the amount of earnings reported by Persons with Disabilities was lower than expected in last quarter of 2022/23, because of lower-than-expected employment growth from January to March 2023. Higher interest rates and a slowdown in global economies impacted employment growth in B.C. and across Canada.

Financial Report

Financial Summary

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations ¹ (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
Operating Expenses					
Income Assistance	3,079,080	204,691	3,283,771	3,288,705	4,934
Employment ²	29,169	0,000	29,169	24,168	-5,001
Community Living Services	1,333,102	29,077	1,362,179	1,362,179	0,000
Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal	1,849	0,000	1,849	1,440	-409
Executive and Support Services	12,833	0,000	12,833	13,309	476
Sub-total	4,456,033	233,768	4,689,801	4,689,801	0,000
Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual ³	0,000	0,000	0,000	-1,437	-1,437
Total	4,456,033	233,768	4,689,801	4,688,364	-1,437
Ministry Capital Expenditures					
Executive and Support Services ⁴	1,822	0,000	1,822	0,000	-1,822
Total	1,822	0,000	1,822	0,000	-1,822

¹ "Other Authorizations" include Supplementary Estimates, Statutory Appropriations and Contingencies. Amounts in this column are not related to the "estimated amount" under sections 5(1) and 6(1) of the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act for ministerial accountability for operating expenses under the Act.

² Reflects WorkBC costs, net of recoveries from the federal government. Total spend in 2022/23 was \$432 million, which included \$24 million in provincial spending and \$408 million recovered from the federal government.

³ The Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual of \$1,437 million is a reversal of accruals in the previous year.

⁴ No vehicles were replaced in 2022/23. Capital budget to support WorkBC was re-profiled to future years.

Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of August 31, 2023, the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

Community Living BC

Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) is a Crown agency that provides supports and services to meet the disability-related needs of two groups of eligible people and their families in British Columbia:

- Adults with a diagnosis of developmental disability. Criteria include age of onset, intellectual functioning, and adaptive behavior; and
- Adults who have a diagnosis of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or autism spectrum disorder (also known as pervasive developmental disorder) and significant limitations in adaptive functioning.

Employment and Assistance Tribunal

The Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal is an administrative tribunal established under the authority of the Employment and Assistance Act to provide clients with an efficient and transparent appeal process that is independent from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. The Tribunal hears appeals on decisions made by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction to refuse, reduce or discontinue certain benefits or supplements. The Tribunal also hears appeals on decisions made by the Ministry of Children and Family Development to refuse, reduce or discontinue a subsidy under the Child Care Subsidy Act.

Appendix B: Progress on Mandate Letter Priorities

The following is a summary of progress made on priorities as stated in Minister Nicholas Simons' [2020 Mandate Letter](#).

2020 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<p>Continue to be responsive to the challenges presented by COVID-19 and work with your cabinet colleagues to support an inclusive economic recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ending of federal supports in September 2021 saw the income assistance caseload increase in October 2021 and each of the next six months before levelling off, while the disability assistance caseload was not impacted. • The strong economy in 2021/22 and 2022/23, combined with the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions, meant that the total amount of income earned and exempted increased by \$27 million in 2021/22 and a further \$22 million in 2022/23 compared to 2020/21. The \$178 million exempted in 2022/23 exceeded the pre-pandemic amount of \$149 million. • To help more people get back to work after pandemic labour market disruptions, the ministry expanded access to WorkBC Employment Services in March 2023 to allow all clients who require a Wage Subsidy, Skills Enhancement or Personal Counselling for Employment Readiness, equal access to services and supports enabling them to successfully attach to the labour market.
<p>Build on our government's Poverty Reduction Plan, TogetherBC, and the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Basic Income to determine the best approach and path forward to reducing poverty long-term and providing opportunities for jobs and skills training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TogetherBC included five foundational elements and 6 areas of focus. SDPR tabled the 2021 Annual Report on progress towards legislated targets October 2022.
<p>Continue to work with people across the province to develop and introduce comprehensive accessibility legislation in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Accessible B.C. Act achieved Royal Assent in June 2021. Since the Act passed, government has made significant

2020 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<p>Spring 2021 to open doors to opportunity and participation.</p>	<p>progress in implementation including launching the establishment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the Provincial Accessibility Committee; ▪ AccessibleBC: B.C.'s Accessibility Plan for 2022/23 to 2024/25; and ▪ the Accessibility Feedback Tool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also, the Accessible B.C. Regulation came into effect September 1, 2022, this requires over 750 public sector organizations to establish their own accessibility committee; accessibility plan, and feedback mechanism to collect concerns about accessibility.
<p>With support from the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, lead work to increase food security for people in need by expanding government support to food banks and developing program partnerships with food producers, grocery stores and not-for-profits to develop discounted food market, food recovery and food redistribution programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the Cross Government Food Security Steering Committee, SDPR, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Health, completed a robust partner engagement on gaps and opportunities to a sustainable food system in B.C. This informed work in 2022/23 that resulted in a historic \$49 million allocation in food security by SDPR to support community food security projects, including Food Banks BC and United Way BC.
<p>Build on the work of so many around the province to make B.C. a global leader in the fight to end period poverty by creating a multi-sectoral Period Poverty Task Force to develop a comprehensive, long-term response to period poverty in B.C</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022/23, SDPR provided \$750,000 to the United Way BC to support a new Period Poverty Task Force. This Task Force will develop recommendations to government on a sustainable approach to period poverty by March 2024. As part of this funding, \$210,000 was awarded to 10 organizations to trial new and innovative ways to address period poverty, including stigma.
<p>Continue work on the Re-imagining Community Inclusion Initiative to improve services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress on the Re-Imagining Community Inclusion 2022/23 – 2024/25 Work Plan is underway across all four priority areas: developing flexible housing options, more

2020 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
	<p>and better employment opportunities, improving access to health and mental health services, and services for Indigenous Peoples are self-determined.</p>
<p>Support the work of the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness, including those living in encampments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing Community Integration Services to provide in-person services to people at risk of, or currently experiencing homelessness within a community, by connecting them with financial assistance and community resources. This includes collaborating with local community partners in providing ministry supports and system navigation services for people who are living in an encampment.
<p>Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility: Engage with advocates, communities and businesses to ensure the new accessibility legislation is effective and well-understood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility has met with numerous advocates, self advocates, and organizations to provide information on the Accessible B.C. Act. • The Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility is the co-chair of the Provincial Accessibility Committee which works to improve accessibility for people with disabilities and supports the implementation of the Act.
<p>Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility: Work with the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing to ensure the next iteration of the BC Building Code includes changes that will make new buildings more accessible for all people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In February and March 2023, the Building and Safety Standards Branch completed engagement with interested parties to share the proposed approach to advance accessibility in the next BC Building Code for feedback, prior to finalization for public review in late Spring 2023. • An engagement summary report and a plain language summary of the proposed accessibility changes has been produced in compliance with government accessibility standards and translated to support public review participants.

2020 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<p>Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits:</p> <p>Work to ensure charitable organizations and the non-profit sector are engaged and supported through the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government announced \$30 million in funding to the Vancouver Foundation to create the Non-Profit Recovery and Resiliency Fund to support non-profits that were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Vancouver Foundation provided an additional \$4 million in 2022/23, \$5 million in multi-year funding was distributed to 23 Indigenous led organizations through the New Relationship Trust. Vancouver Foundation developed a new trust-based approach to granting, calling for applications before October 2022. Multi-year grants are expected to be disbursed in early 2023/24.
<p>Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits:</p> <p>Support charitable organizations and the non-profit sector by acting as the advocate and key point of contact within government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In late 2022/23, the Parliamentary Secretary met with hundreds of non-profits to better understand cross cutting policy issues facing non-profits. Some key concerns include a reduction in volunteerism, capacity challenges for organizations coming through the pandemic.

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan

February 2024



For more information on the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction contact:

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

STN PROV GOVT

Victoria BC

V8W 9R2

1-866-866-0800

Or visit our website at

www.gov.bc.ca/SDPR

Published by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared.

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'SM', written over a horizontal line.

Honourable Sheila Malcolmson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
February 22, 2024

Table of Contents

Minister’s Accountability Statement	3
Strategic Direction.....	5
Purpose of the Ministry.....	5
Operating Environment.....	6
Performance Planning	8
Financial Summary	15
Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations	16

Strategic Direction

In 2023/24, the Government of British Columbia will continue our work to make life better for people in B.C., improve the services we all rely on, and ensure a sustainable province for future generations. Government will focus on building a secure, clean, and fair economy, and a province where everyone can find a good home – whether in a rural area, in a city, or in an Indigenous community. B.C. will continue working toward true and meaningful reconciliation by supporting opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to be full partners in an inclusive and sustainable province. The policies, programs and projects developed over the course of this service plan period will focus on results that people can see and feel in four key areas: attainable and affordable housing, strengthened health care, safer communities, and a secure, clean and fair economy that can withstand global economic headwinds.

This 2024/25 service plan outlines how the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction will support the government’s priorities and selected items identified in the [December 2022 Minister’s Mandate Letter](#).

Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) focuses on reducing poverty, creating opportunities and increasing inclusion. The purpose of the ministry is to provide quality services for British Columbians in need, to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in their community and to reach their full potential.

SDPR is guided by five pieces of legislation: the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#), the [Employment and Assistance Act](#), the [Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act](#), the [Poverty Reduction Strategy Act](#) and the [Community Living Authority Act](#). The Minister is responsible for [Community Living BC](#) (CLBC) and is supported by the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits and the Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility. The ministry’s key priorities include:

- Updating the [TogetherBC: BC’s Poverty Reduction Strategy](#) by March 2024, to continue reducing the number of people, and in particular children, who are in poverty in B.C.;
- Leading work with the Ministry of Finance to continue addressing impacts on low-income people caused by cost-of-living increases related to global inflation;
- Continuing to lead work on food security and dignified access to food in partnerships with food producers, grocery stores, food banks, schools, and non-profits, with support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food;
- Supporting the work of the Ministry of Housing to better coordinate services to deliver improved outcomes for people living in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, in collaboration with the Ministries of Mental Health and Addictions, Health, and Public Safety and Solicitor General, as well as Indigenous Peoples, external partners and others;
- Ensuring the voices of people living with disabilities are heard in all policy development; and,

- Continuing work to engage advocates, communities, and businesses to ensure the new *Accessible British Columbia Act* is well understood and effective at making B.C. more accessible and inclusive for everyone – including the implementation of accessible service delivery and employment accessibility standards.

Further to the above, two key priorities for the ministry (outside mandate letters) are:

- Leading collaborative engagement through the [Social Services Sector Roundtable](#) to help strengthen the important community social services that people count on every day; and,
- Through [Community Living BC](#), continue working on the [Re-imagining Community Inclusion Initiative](#) and the [Re-imagining Community Inclusion Work Plan](#) to improve services for adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

Operating Environment

The ministry continues to review and adjust its programs and supports to better serve people in BC who are challenged by:

- Barriers to employment;
- Poverty;
- Affordability and food security; and,
- Accessibility.

The ministry provides income and disability assistance to an average of 235,000 people each month, including 124,000 people with the Persons with Disabilities designation and 48,000 dependent children. Caseloads are expected to increase over the next few years as the result of a slowing economy.

The ministry provided employment services through WorkBC to about 82,000 people in 2022/23, serving about 24% per cent more people than in the previous year. The demand for employment services has been increasing, primarily driven by an increase in the numbers of immigrants seeking services. SDPR remains committed to ensuring employment services provide supports to those facing more complex barriers to employment, to better serve those who are under-represented in the labour market.

In 2023, updated poverty related statistics became available for 2021. Although the government is still meeting its poverty reduction targets, the 2021 data showed that poverty worsened compared to 2020, as federal COVID-related government supports ended.¹ The number of British Columbians living in poverty in 2021 increased by 65,000 to 447,000 according to the Market Basket Measure (MBM).² This includes 70,000 children living in low-income families and 70,000 seniors. This dynamic has been a focal point for the ministry's work to renew the province's Poverty Reduction Strategy for March 2024. To

¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/230502/dq230502a-eng.pdf?st=KaW3Hsy4>

² [Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

date SDPR has heard from over 10,000 people across the province, over 70% with lived experience of poverty, to continue to shape government programs and services that reduce poverty and remove barriers for those most in need of support.

The increase in the global inflation rate that started in 2022/23 has put great pressure on low- and middle-income British Columbians. Food and rent costs continue to rise at a much higher rate than the average for all goods and services. This has forced many more people to rely on food banks and crisis supplements. Interest rate increases to control inflation have created additional affordability problems for homeowners and other borrowers, and this is predicted to continue into at least 2024.

While high inflation rates worsen inequality and poverty, initiatives to help improve affordability across BC include: creating the [BC Affordability Credit](#), increasing the [BC Family Benefit](#) and [income assistance shelter rates](#), providing over \$50 million to support [food access programs](#), \$15 million for the [First Nations Wellbeing Fund](#), and \$60 million for the [Stronger Community Services Fund](#) to support non-profit organizations working on poverty and social inclusion.

Demographics and Economy

The income assistance caseload is sensitive to demographics and the state of the labour market. In 2022/23 the income assistance caseload increased by 10.8% as the ending of federal COVID benefits resulted in more people requiring provincial assistance.

The disability assistance caseload, made up of people who have a disability designation, has continued to grow as the result of longer life expectancies and growing population. The disability assistance caseload increased by 2.1% in 2022/23 compared to 1.5% in the previous year, which was the lowest growth rate since 1988/89.

British Columbia's economic recovery continued in 2022/23. The number of people unemployed fell by 23%, decreasing the unemployment rate to 4.5% in 2022/23. A strong labour market was key to supporting employable clients to work. While the labour market has been strong in 2023, a slowing economy and rising unemployment could put pressure on both the caseload and poverty.

Despite the strong labour market, there are still people seeking employment supports. However, those seeking services have more significant barriers to employment. 76% of employment clients currently underrepresented in the labour market, including Immigrants, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, require additional time spent working with an employment counsellor and more intensive supports to prepare them for employment.

The ministry's work to continue to meet poverty reduction targets will be supported by its ongoing focus on providing accessible services and supports for people struggling with affordability, food security, risks of homelessness or homelessness, and removing barriers to employment for people underrepresented in the labour market.

Performance Planning

Goal 1: Reduce Poverty in British Columbia

The ministry is responsible for the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*, which sets out legislated targets and actions to reduce poverty in British Columbia.

Objective 1.1: Implement the cross-government, province-wide Poverty-Reduction Strategy

As the lead on British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy, the ministry works across government to ensure that the requirements and targets as set out in the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* are achieved.

Key Strategies

- Update TogetherBC, the comprehensive, cross-government Poverty Reduction Strategy, by 2024 to continue to meet BC's poverty reduction targets and address other pressing issues such as the depth of poverty, the cycle of poverty, food security and inflation.
- Build on results from the broad public engagement that took place in 2023 with over 10,000 British Columbians, including 70% with lived or living experience of poverty, to inform an update to [TogetherBC](#). This includes ongoing engagement and co-development with Indigenous partners to meet the spirit and intent of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
- Continue to lead government's work, in partnership with other ministries and external partners, to address food security for people in need and support a long-term, sustainable approach to food insecurity in BC.
- Review the BC Employment and Assistance legislation to improve access and outcomes and reduce barriers to community and labour market participation.
- Continue to support the multi-sectoral Period Poverty Task Force; the task force is to submit recommendations by March 2024.

Discussion

The ending of COVID supports, high inflation, and a slowing economy in 2023 and 2024 increase the need for the ministry to continue to work on poverty reduction. The current poverty reduction strategy must be reviewed and updated in 2024, including future targets. As part of the review, the ministry is working with other ministries, consulting with the Minister's Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee, and engaging people across British Columbia to learn

their experiences with poverty. A broad public and targeted engagement to update the poverty reduction strategy was undertaken in 2023 with over 10,000 British Columbians, including over 70% with lived and living experience of poverty. The engagement findings are also informing a review of the legislative framework governing British Columbia’s income and disability assistance program. This review intends to examine the barriers faced by recipients of assistance, including from a GBA+ and reconciliation perspective. Consultation and partnership with Indigenous partners will be ongoing as the strategy is developed and implemented.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure[s]	2020 Actual	2021 Actuals	2022-2024 Target
[1a] Change in Total Poverty Rate from 2016 ¹	-52.5%	-45.0%	-25.0%
[1b] Change in Child Poverty Rate from 2016	-71.3%	-54.6%	-50.0%

Data source: Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0135-01 Low-income statistics by age, sex and economic family type.

¹ As a result of a delay in the reporting of poverty statistics and the time it takes for investments to impact poverty rates, there are no interim targets.

Discussion

The *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* sets out legislated targets for the reduction of both the overall poverty rate (25%) and the poverty rate for children (50%) by 2024. The targets were set to be ambitious but also achievable and would result in significant improvements in the lives of low-income British Columbians.

The Province uses Statistics Canada’s Market Basket Measure (MBM)³ as its official poverty measure. The MBM is also Canada’s official poverty measure. There is a two-year delay in producing the data since it relies on income tax data provided by the federal government.

Goal 2: British Columbians in need have services, supports and opportunities that make life better

The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction focuses on providing a system of supports to British Columbians in need, to help them achieve their social and economic independence and secure a better future.

Objective 2.1: Deliver reliable, responsive, consistent, accessible and secure income and disability assistance services

Delivering modern and consistent service with a focus on reliability, responsiveness and

³ [Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.commerce.gc.ca/low-income-statistics)

