

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES
Service Plan Summary
2002/03 – 2004/05

Mission

The Ministry of Human Resources provides services that move people to sustainable employment and assist individuals and families in need.

Strategic Shifts – *From BC Benefits to BC Employment and Assistance*

The ministry is redefining British Columbia's income assistance system through new guiding principles:

- **Personal responsibility**
- **Active participation**
- **Innovative partnerships**
- **Citizen confidence**
- **Fair and understandable**
- **Clear outcomes**
- **Accountability for results**

These principles underpin the ministry's mandate to assist people into employment, to provide job placement and job training programs, and to provide income assistance to those truly in need. Employable applicants will be expected to look for work before they receive assistance, and employment plans will be required. Temporary income assistance will be available to eligible clients who are looking for work or require skills upgrading.

People with disabilities who can work will be supported by employment programs that recognize the cyclical nature of some disabilities. Assistance will continue to be available to those who are not expected to gain independence through employment.

The redefined system will better assist clients to find long-term employment, provide a continuing safety net for those most in need, reduce long-term dependence, reduce red tape, and provide greater fiscal accountability.

Core Business Areas - *BC Employment and Assistance*

The Ministry's mission and mandate is supported by five core business areas:

Employment Programs

- Employment services will assist clients to find and maintain employment, including programs that support persons with disabilities. Employment and Assistance Agreements will be completed by clients as a condition of eligibility. Individualized employment plans may include referral to directed job search, job placement programs and/or specific training for employment.

Temporary Assistance

- Temporary Assistance will be available to eligible individuals who are capable of financial independence through employment. Some persons with disabilities may be eligible to receive Temporary Assistance and will be expected to work. Those unable to work because of a short-term medical condition, because they are a single parent caring for a young child, or because they are caring for a disabled family member may be temporarily excused from seeking employment.

Continuous Assistance

- Continuous Assistance will be available to eligible individuals who are not expected to gain independence through employment. This will include individuals with severe disabilities and those with persistent multiple barriers to employment.

Supplementary Assistance

- Supplementary Assistance will provide health assistance to clients with disabilities and some clients temporarily excused from work. Other programs and services include emergency social services, child care subsidies, bus passes, hostels and emergency shelters, travel assistance, and user fees for continuing care and for alcohol and drug facilities.

Corporate Services and Service Delivery

- This core business will provide for executive direction and direct operating costs of delivering *BC Employment and Assistance*, for research and performance measurement, employee services, financial services, information technology and information management.

Major Initiatives

Through *BC Employment and Assistance*, the Ministry of Human Resources is redefining income assistance. The ministry's new direction, as reflected in its mandate for employment, job training and income assistance, entails a substantial redesign of the ministry's programs and services. Some of the major changes are:

Legislation:

New legislation will enable the ministry to provide services and programs for individuals and families in need.

- *BC Employment and Assistance* will replace *BC Benefits* and four existing BC Benefits Acts will be consolidated.

Appeal System:

Clients will have access to a fair and impartial appeal system.

- A new streamlined appeal process based on independent, regional tribunals will result in timely and transparent decision-making.
- The new appeal process will replace the BC Benefits Appeal Board.

Employability:

BC Employment and Assistance will focus on employment and independence. Programs will assist clients to obtain employment through work search or direct job placement. Programs will be designed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

- Individuals will participate in an employment orientation and three-week self-directed job search prior to completing an application.
- Applicants will sign Employment and Assistance Agreements outlining the actions they will take to obtain employment.
- Individualized employment plans will refer clients to job placement programs targeted to sustained employment.
- Clients that do not comply with the terms of their employment plans will be subject to reductions in their assistance.
- Employment plans may also refer clients to job training programs that will assist them to gain specific skills for the current labour market.
- Earnings exemptions and income treatment will support increased independence for persons with disabilities.
- Employment programs will support persons with disabilities in self-employment and in part-time and cyclical employment.

Eligibility:

BC Employment and Assistance will be available to support individuals and families in need. The ministry will determine eligibility based on income and asset policies that are clear and understandable. Changes to current eligibility criteria include:

- Employable single parents will be expected to work when their youngest child turns age 3, changed from the current age of 7.
- Full-time post-secondary students who have access to BC Student Financial Assistance will no longer be eligible for income assistance.
- Legal guardians will no longer be eligible under the Child in the Home of a Relative program. Payments will continue to be provided when parents are unable to financially support a child and place the child with a relative.
- Dependent children of clients will now be required to attend school as a condition of the family's eligibility for assistance.
- Individuals convicted of income assistance fraud under the Criminal Code will now be banned from receiving assistance.
- Applicants age 19 and over will now be required to be independent for two years after leaving their parents' home to be eligible for assistance.
- Eligibility for the Child Care Subsidy will be restructured to a reduced average income level. Income assistance and lower income families will continue to be eligible.
- The Bus Pass subsidy will no longer be available to Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Support (OAS/GIS) recipients. The bus pass will continue to be available to persons with disabilities.
- Diet assistance criteria will be restructured with a requirement to demonstrate specific medical diagnoses. The Monthly Nutritional Supplement will continue.
- Family maintenance payments that are owed to a custodial parent while they are receiving assistance will be paid to the ministry.
- The Seniors Supplement, which provides financial support payments in addition to the federal government's OAS/GIS, will be phased out over time so that there is no net decrease to recipients.
- Short-term homemaker services for housekeeping for income assistance clients will no longer be provided.
- Hardship Assistance will be eliminated in certain circumstances, such as when a person quits a job voluntarily, or for refugee claimants.
- Supplementary Health Assistance for items such as extended therapies, and medical equipment and supplies will no longer be provided to persons who are not ministry clients.

Rates:

BC Employment and Assistance rates will be determined by family size and client category. Persons with disabilities will receive higher rates to account for their extra medical costs.

- The annual Christmas Allowance will be targeted to dependent children only.
- The shelter allowance will be adjusted to reflect regional differences in shelter costs.
- Shelter payments will be eliminated for adult clients living with an adult relative (excluding persons with disabilities).
- Shelter rates will be restructured for families with two or more children, with payments based on lower unit rates.
- Support payments for employable single parents, for employable individuals age 55-59, and for employable individuals age 60–64 will be reduced to match those rates for employable individuals age 19-54.
- Eligible employable singles and couples will receive assistance for a maximum of two years out of every five years. Eligible employable parents with dependent children will receive full income assistance for a maximum of two years out of every five years, after which their rates will be reduced by an average of 11 per cent.
- Earnings exemptions will be eliminated for clients, except persons with disabilities.
- Family Maintenance payment exemptions for clients will be eliminated.

Business Transformation:

The ministry's services will be accessible to all British Columbians. The ministry will direct funds to eligible recipients and will focus on preventing and investigating fraud.

- The ministry will assess effective practices, including e-business, to make delivery of service to the public efficient and cost effective.
- Efficiency measures will result in a 15 per cent reduction of 459 FTEs across all ministry programs, and 36 offices will be closed. The ministry will continue to deliver services through 162 offices across the province.
- Employment programs will be performance-based, with payments to service providers based on demonstrated success in clients' attachment to the work force.
- Community services programs will be restructured to reflect the ministry's mandate and provide services that assist individuals and families in need.

Ministry Resources

	Fiscal Year				Percent Change 2001/02 to 2004/05
	(restated estimates) 2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	
Operating Expenses (million\$)	1,937	1,789	1,550	1,356	-30.0%
FTEs	3,006	2,799	2,547	2,547	-15.3%

Government Priorities Relating to Ministry of Human Resources

Key Projects Included in 02/03 – 04/05 Service Plan

The June 25, 2001 letter from the Premier to the Minister identified three key priorities for this ministry:

1. Continue to streamline service delivery to recipients of income assistance.
2. Implement training and support programs to assist income assistance recipients in returning to the workforce.
3. Develop a single internal appeal process through the Administrative Justice Project.