

**Ministry of
Social Development
and Poverty Reduction**

**2021/22 – 2023/24
SERVICE PLAN**

April 2021



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Minister's Accountability Statement



The *Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 2021/22 – 2023/24 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 black ink that reads "Nicholas Simons".

Honourable Nicholas Simons
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
March 31, 2021

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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 strategic leadership and quality services that empower British Columbians in need to share in the Province's prosperity, so that everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in their community and to reach their full potential.

SDPR is guided by four pieces of legislation: 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 responsibilities include:

- Leading development and implementation of [TogetherBC: BC's Poverty Reduction Strategy](#);
- Supporting the work of the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing and other government initiatives to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness in British Columbia;
- Providing income, disability and supplemental assistance for people in need;
- Leading work to increase food security for all British Columbians;
- Creating a multi-sector Period Poverty Task Force to develop a long-term response to period poverty in B.C.;
- Providing an integrated system of employment programs, services and supports to all British Columbians through [WorkBC](#);
- Leading development and implementation of cross-government, province-wide accessibility legislation to identify and remove barriers and prevent the creation of new barriers for people with disabilities;
- Working with community, business and government partners to increase accessibility, employment, independence and inclusion for individuals with disabilities;
- Working to advocate and ensure that charitable organizations and the non-profit sector are engaged and supported through the COVID-19 pandemic and into recovery;
- 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](#) to improve services for adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

Strategic Direction

In 2021/22, British Columbians continue to face significant challenges as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Government of British Columbia is continually evolving to meet the changing needs of people in this province. Government has identified five foundational principles that will inform each ministry's work and contribute to COVID-19 recovery: putting people first, lasting and meaningful reconciliation, equity and anti-racism, a better future through fighting climate change and meeting our greenhouse gas reduction commitments, and a strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced economic activity in B.C. in 2020. The ongoing evolution and economic cost of the pandemic on B.C. and its trading partners remains highly uncertain. The Economic Forecast Council (EFC) estimates a 5.1 per cent decline in B.C. real GDP in 2020 and expects growth of 4.9 per cent in 2021 and 4.3 per cent in 2022. Meanwhile for Canada, the EFC projects national real GDP growth of 4.7 per cent in 2021 and 4.2 per cent in 2022, following an estimated decline of 5.4 per cent in 2020. As such, B.C.'s economic growth is expected to outperform Canada's in the coming years. The pandemic has increased risks to B.C.'s economic outlook, such as the timing of the global vaccination rollout, extended travel restrictions, a weaker global recovery, and the continued impact of a slower recovery in some sectors of the B.C. economy. Further risks include ongoing uncertainty regarding global trade policies and lower commodity prices.

This 2021/22 service plan outlines how the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction will support the government's priorities including the foundational principles listed above and selected action items identified in the November 2020 [Minister's Mandate Letter](#).

Performance Planning

Goal 1: Reduce Poverty in British Columbia

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

Key Strategies

- Implement [TogetherBC](#), the comprehensive, cross-government Poverty Reduction Strategy addressing key areas of need including housing; families, children and youth; education; employment; income supports including the permanent rate increases [announced](#) in March 2021; and other social supports, aiming to meet statutory targets to reduce the overall poverty rate by 25% and poverty rate of children by 50% by 2024;
- Produce an annual report on the actions taken to implement the strategy, the effects of the strategy on poverty reduction, and any progress made toward the targets in the previous calendar year;
- Engage with the Minister’s Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee, which advises the minister on matters relating to poverty reduction and prevention;
- Review the basic income expert panel’s 65 recommendations as outlined in their final report, [Covering All the Basics: Reforms for a More Just Society](#) (released January 28, 2021); and
- Lead work to increase food security for people in need and create a multi-sectoral Period Poverty Task Force to develop a comprehensive long-term response to period poverty in B.C.

Performance Measure(s)	2016 Baseline	2019 Actual	2020-2024 Target
1.1a Total Poverty Rate ¹	15.3%	10.8%	11.5%
1.1b Child Poverty Rate ¹	17.0%	7.2%	8.5%

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

¹ 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. The most recent federal data released in March 2021 provides low income statistics for 2019.

Linking Performance Measure to Objective

These measures reflect the official poverty statistics produced by Statistics Canada using the current Market Basket Measure, also referred to as Canada’s Official Poverty Line. Lower poverty rates mean that government investments to help people living in low income and to improve the economy are reducing both poverty levels and rates. Monitoring poverty rates across vulnerable populations will lead to better targeting of investments and will help government achieve its poverty reduction targets.

Discussion

The *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* sets out legislated targets for the reduction of both the overall poverty rate and the poverty rate for children by 2024. The *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* also requires annual reporting on the Strategy – including progress made towards the legislated targets. The [first annual report](#) was released on December 10, 2020.

According to the most recent federal statistics on low income, British Columbia has already achieved both targets set out in the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* based on 2019 data. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on poverty rates is uncertain and will be reflected in data for 2020 and 2021 that will be reported out in future years.

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

Key Strategies

- Consider the diverse needs of clients to improve the quality and responsiveness of income assistance services;
- Continued community presence through outreach by Community Integration Specialists, working collaboratively with community partners;
- Continue to expand and improve online self-service options;
- Regularly monitor client feedback and satisfaction to help improve services; and
- Ensure administrative fairness through the provision of an effective and efficient reconsideration and appeal system.

Performance Measure(s)	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Forecast	2021/22 Target	2022/23 Target	2023/24 Target
2.1 Number of clients using My Self-Serve	87,109	96,000	99,000	101,000	103,000

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

Linking Performance Measure to Objective

This measure reflects the number of Ministry clients using My Self-Serve, the ministry’s online service portal. Targets can be achieved through increased marketing and robust communication. An increase in this number means that more clients are accessing income assistance services through the most flexible and efficient means available.

Discussion

The Ministry modified this performance measure to the percentage of clients using My Self-Serve, rather than the number of users and the updated measures will be provided in the 2021/22 Service Plan. This is a more appropriate indicator of progress as it illustrates the proportion of all clients accessing income assistance services by the most flexible and efficient means available.

Objective 2.2: WorkBC Employment Services clients achieve employment

Key Strategies

- Reduce barriers and provide employment services and supports to British Columbians looking to reach their full potential through employment;
- Provide access to training and employment supports that will increase economic opportunities;
- Work collaboratively with partner ministries, employers and employer associations to ensure ministry employment programs and supports are aligned with the needs of individuals and the changing labour market;
- Implement awareness and information campaigns to enhance the recognition and consistent knowledge of the suite of services available through the network of WorkBC Centres across B.C.; and
- Continue to actively promote awareness of the Community and Employer Partnerships (CEP) program to effectively respond to emerging labour market events, support employers and communities to address labour market needs and improve employment outcomes for unemployed British Columbians.

Performance Measure(s)	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Forecast	2021/22 Target	2022/23 Target	2023/24 Target
2.2 The number of clients who achieve employment ¹	18,000	12,700	28,300	28,300	28,300

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

¹ 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.

Linking Performance Measure to Objective

This measure captures the number of British Columbians who achieve employment after receiving services and/or supports through WorkBC Employment Services (both self-serve and case managed). Since April 1, 2019, 57% of case managed clients obtained employment after receiving case managed services by WorkBC Employment Services and at least 23% of self-serve clients obtained employment after receiving assistance through WorkBC.

Discussion

As a result of the ongoing pandemic, fewer people are seeking employment services and supports, due to concern for personal safety arising from potential workplace exposure to COVID-19 as well as the availability of federal benefits such as the Canada Recovery Benefit. The 2020/21 forecast has been significantly reduced from prior years as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the provincial labour market, coupled with the extended federal government supports provided to citizens.

It has also been harder to achieve employment, with some industries such as tourism and hospitality needing to reduce capacity in order to adhere to public health restrictions, despite additional funding provided for the employment initiatives like the [Work Experience Opportunities Grant](#) as a part of [StrongerBC, B.C.'s Economic Recovery Plan](#). WorkBC continues to adapt its strategies to respond to the challenges related to COVID-19. While there is still much uncertainty that may impact the labour market, the target for future years has been maintained as it is expected that once vaccines are rolled out and the Public Health Orders become less restrictive, demand for WorkBC services will increase.

The performance measure has been updated to include all clients accessing WorkBC Employment Services (formerly just case managed) as better data has been made available on self-service clients and the services accessed by them.

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

Key Strategies

- Provide adults with disabilities access to responsive services that support them in participating as full citizens and in achieving improved outcomes;
- Continue to work with people with disabilities and their families, community stakeholders, public organizations and the business community to develop solutions and strategies that improve the lives of people with disabilities in British Columbia;
- Engage stakeholders and the public to identify barriers and solutions to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities;
- Support the Re-Imagining Community Inclusion (RCI) Steering Committee in developing a work plan in response to the 10-year [Re-Imagining Community Inclusion Roadmap](#) to help improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities; and
- Monitor and support the transition process for youth with special needs, who are entering adulthood, to ensure they access the Ministry’s disability assistance program and the adult community living services offered through Community Living BC.

Performance Measure(s)	2019/20 Baseline	2020/21 Forecast	2021/22 Target	2022/23 Target	2023/24 Target
3.1 Total amount of earnings exemptions reported by Persons with Disabilities cases ¹	\$135 million	\$120 million	\$150 million	\$168 million	\$170 million

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

¹ The impact of COVID-19 on the labour market has reduced PWD earnings and has lowered the forecast for 2020/21 and the target for 2021/22.

Linking Performance Measure to Objective

Employment provides meaningful participation and inclusion, as well as the ability for the Ministry’s Persons with Disabilities clients to take advantage of earnings exemptions and increase their total income. An increase in the total amount of exempted earnings reported by these clients is an indicator that both participation in employment and incomes have improved.

Discussion

COVID-19 resulted in a significant downturn in the economy, especially in the first three months of the pandemic. Although the labour market has improved, and despite additional funding provided for employment opportunities for Persons with Disabilities as a part of the [StrongerBC, B.C.'s Economic Recovery Plan](#), the service sector continues to experience challenges. The service sector is a main employer for people on income and disability assistance. The performance measure forecast for 2020/21 and future year targets were reduced to reflect the impacts of the pandemic on employment and a gradual recovery.

Financial Summary

Core Business Area	2020/21 Restated Estimates ¹	2021/22 Estimates	2022/23 Plan	2023/24 Plan
Operating Expenses (\$000)				
Income Assistance	2,500,272	3,026,572	3,091,245	3,099,347
Employment	29,169	29,169	29,169	29,169
Community Living Services	1,139,699	1,290,394	1,321,122	1,335,569
Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal	1,837	1,849	1,849	1,849
Executive and Support Services	10,858	11,817	11,827	11,838
Total	3,681,835	4,359,801	4,455,212	4,477,772
Ministry Capital Expenditures (Consolidated Revenue Fund) (\$000)				
Executive and Support Services	1,449	2,313	1,295	1,295
Total	1,449	2,313	1,295	1,295

¹ For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2020/21 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2021/22 Estimates.

* Further information on program funding and vote recoveries is available in the [Estimates and Supplement to the Estimates](#).

Appendix A: Agencies, Boards, Commissions and Tribunals

[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 individuals 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 Appeal 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*.