

**Ministry of  
Social Development  
and Poverty Reduction**

**2022/23 – 2024/25  
SERVICE PLAN**

**February 2022**



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## Minister's Accountability Statement



The *Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 2022/23 – 2024/25 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 "N. Simons".

Honourable Nicholas Simons  
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
February 22, 2022

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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, 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 the Crown corporation 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 to people in need;
- Creating and implementing strategies to increase food security for people in need;
- 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 implementation of the Accessible B.C. Act with the goal to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in B.C.;
- Working with community, business and government partners to increase accessibility, employment, independence and inclusion for individuals with disabilities;
- Working to advocate for the charitable and non-profit sector and ensure that it is 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 2022/2023, the Government of British Columbia will continue its whole-of-government response to the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on protecting the health, social and economic well-being of British Columbians. Building on our economic, environmental, and social strengths while looking to seize opportunities to improve outcomes for all British Columbians will be an important aspect of each ministry's work as we respond to COVID-19 and recover from devastating floods and wildfires. The policies, programs and projects developed over the

course of this service plan period will align with the five foundational principles established by Government in 2020: putting people first; working toward lasting and meaningful reconciliation; supporting equity and anti-racism; ensuring a better future through fighting climate change and meeting our greenhouse gas reduction targets; and supporting a strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone.

This 2022/23 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](#).

## **Economic Statement**

B.C.'s economy has rebounded from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020, despite significant pandemic variant and climate-related events. A strong health response, high vaccination rates, increased infrastructure investments and supports for British Columbians struggling through the pandemic has helped the province rebound. While the recovery has broadened over the past year, it remains uneven with sectors like tourism, hospitality and live recreation events not fully recovered. The path of the ongoing economic recovery in B.C. and its trading partners remains highly uncertain. However, rebuild efforts from the November 2021 floods are expected to provide some support to economic activity in the province. The Economic Forecast Council (EFC) estimates that B.C. real GDP expanded by 5.1 per cent in 2021 and expects growth of 4.2 per cent in 2022 and 2.7 per cent in 2023. Meanwhile for Canada, the EFC projects national real GDP growth of 4.1 per cent in 2022 and 2.8 per cent in 2023, following an estimated gain of 4.7 per cent in 2021. As such, B.C.'s economic growth is expected to be broadly in line with the national average in the coming years. The pandemic has increased risks to B.C.'s economic outlook, such as the emergence of further variants of concern, inflationary supply chain disruptions, extended travel restrictions, and the continued impact of the slower recovery in some sectors of the B.C. economy. Further risks include ongoing uncertainty regarding global trade policies, and lower commodity prices.

## 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, 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;
- Create and implement initiatives 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.; and
- Review existing government income support programs for opportunities to improve access and delivery, guided by feedback from users and the basic income panel’s recommendations as outlined in their final report [Covering all the Basics: Reforms for a More Just Society](#) (released January 28, 2021).

Performance Measure(s)	2016 Baseline	2019 Actual	2020-24 Target
1.1a Total Poverty Reduction <sup>1</sup>	15.3%	10.8%	11.5%
1.1b Child Poverty Rate <sup>1</sup>	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](#).

<sup>1</sup> The legislated targets are based on calendar years (not fiscal years) and reflect a 25% reduction in the rate of overall poverty and a 50% reduction in the rate of 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 [second annual report](#) was released on October 4, 2021.

In March 2021, the largest ever permanent rate increase to income and disability assistance was announced (\$175/month) to support the transition from temporary COVID crisis funding to recovery and permanent assistance changes. B.C. also introduced the first rate increase to the Senior's Supplement since its creation in 1987 (\$50/month) as well as a \$20/month increase to the Comforts Allowance for those on income assistance living in special care facilities.

According to the most recent federal statistics on low income, British Columbia has achieved both targets set out in the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* based on 2019 data. However, British Columbia must maintain this success to 2024 to meet the requirements as set out in the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant shock to the labour market, and the long-term impact of the pandemic on poverty rates is currently uncertain. These impacts are expected to be better understood with the release of the 2020 low-income statistics in 2022.



## 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;
- Increase community presence through expanded outreach by Community Integration Specialists, working collaboratively with community partners including expanding the use of mobile technology to support service delivery;
- Continue to expand and improve digital self-service options including usability improvements and better client accessibility;
- 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)	2020/21 Baseline	2021/22 Forecast	2022/23 Target	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target
2.1 Number of clients using My Self-Serve	97,543	103,300	104,000 <sup>1</sup>	105,000 <sup>1</sup>	106,000

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

<sup>1</sup> The 2022/23 and 2023/24 targets have been updated from the 2021/21 Service Plan

#### 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 continued to promote My Self Serve during the pandemic and extreme weather events that occurred in 2021/2022, which resulted in more clients using this online service portal than forecasted. The ministry has updated the future year targets to reflect this higher usage in 2021/22 and continuing efforts to improve digital self-service options.

## Objective 2.2: WorkBC Employment Services clients achieve employment

### Key Strategies

- Adapt programming and service delivery to maximize access to employment services and supports for British Columbians with diverse needs while protecting the health and safety of clients and staff during the COVID-19 crisis and economic recovery;
- 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, especially sectors and employers hardest-hit by COVID-19;
- 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
- Promote awareness of the [Community and Employer Partnerships](#) (CEP) program to support inclusive economic recovery in B.C. communities following COVID-19, wildfires, floods and other labour market events to improve employment outcomes for unemployed British Columbians.

Performance Measure(s)	2020/21 Baseline	2021/22 Forecast	2022/23 Target	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target
2.1 Number of clients who achieve employment <sup>1</sup>	12,900	13,500 <sup>2</sup>	20,000	24,000	28,300

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> The 2021/22 forecast has changed significantly compared to the target identified in the 2019/20 Service Plan. The original target was set with the expectation of an expeditious labour market recovery in a period of economic uncertainty.

### 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, 55% 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

In fiscal 2021/22 there continues to be uncertainty regarding the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the need for ongoing provincial health measures, and the resulting impacts to the labour market. Overall employment in B.C. has recovered, with the 61.4% employment rate in December 2021 just shy of the 61.7% experienced in February 2020 prior to the

pandemic. However, high-contact service industries are expected to take longer to recover and there are fewer jobs in lower skilled occupations. Over the last year employment in lower skilled occupations (requiring high school or less) was 57,000 below levels seen pre-pandemic. This creates challenges for income assistance clients as almost 75% of new starting Expected-to-Work cases have high school or less as their highest level of educational attainment.

Many unemployed individuals have been out of the labour market for an extended period of time. In December 2021, 26.4% of all unemployed in British Columbia had been unemployed for 27 or more weeks, double the rate of 12.8% in February 2020. This can lead to people needing more support and taking longer to acquire the necessary skills and experience to find new sustainable employment. In response, WorkBC adapted its strategies including expanding eligibility for services such as wage subsidy and skills enhancement.

An additional challenge is that there is a high number of job vacancies and people unemployed in B.C., indicating that there is a disconnect between employers who are wanting to hire and people wanting to work. In the third quarter of 2021 there were 158,000 job vacancies and 178,000 unemployed British Columbians. Over half of the job vacancies were in the sales and service sector and trade sectors, sectors where employment was also over 75,000 lower in December 2021 than before the recession.

Due to continued challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the remaining uncertainty on the timing of recovery for some sectors, the targets for 2022/23 and 2023/24 have been adjusted to reflect a gradual return to pre-pandemic expectations. Targets are based on a blended forecast of future caseloads, historical trends of achieving employment, service duration and labour market changes. Adjustments are a result of the economic disruption, changes in Employment Insurance recipient caseloads, BC Employment and Assistance referral and acceptance rates, and current labour market conditions.

### 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 and engage stakeholders and the public to identify barriers and solutions to improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities;
- Support the Re-imagining Community Inclusion (RCI) Steering Committee in implementing the work plan in response to the [10-Year Re-imagining Community Inclusion Roadmap](#) to help improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities;
- 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; and
- Support the implementation of the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) to ensure people with disabilities can meaningfully participate in their communities, including in employment.

Performance Measure(s)	2020/21 Baseline	2021/22 Forecast	2022/23 Target	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target
3.1a Total amount of earnings exemptions reported by Persons with Disabilities cases	\$129 million	\$150 million	\$168 million	\$170 million	\$173 million

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

##### 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 economic downturn early in the pandemic but improvements in the economy have returned employment to pre-pandemic levels in many sectors. Additional funding provided for employment opportunities for Persons with Disabilities as a part of [StrongerBC](#), B.C.’s Economic Recovery Plan, has helped many people impacted by the downturn to return to employment. However, the service sector continues to experience challenges, and this sector is a main employer for people on income and disability assistance.

While the improvement in the labour market has contributed to increased earnings and exempted amounts for Persons with Disabilities, some of the growth experienced in 2021/22 is the result of the increase in earnings exemptions. For a single person, the annualized earnings exemption was increased from \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year.

## Financial Summary

Core Business Area	2021/22 Restated Estimates <sup>1</sup>	2022/23 Estimates	2023/24 Plan	2024/25 Plan
<b>Operating Expenses (\$000)</b>				
Income Assistance	3,027,205	3,079,080	3,093,986	3,109,577
Employment	29,169	29,169	29,169	29,169
Community Living Services	1,290,394	1,333,102	1,352,549	1,357,549
Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal	1,849	1,849	1,849	1,849
Executive and Support Services	11,817	12,833	12,550	12,802
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,360,434</b>	<b>4,456,033</b>	<b>4,490,103</b>	<b>4,510,946</b>
<b>Ministry Capital Expenditures (Consolidated Revenue Fund) (\$000)</b>				
Executive and Support Services	2,313	1,822	1,555	1,555
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,313</b>	<b>1,822</b>	<b>1,555</b>	<b>1,555</b>

<sup>1</sup> For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2021/22 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2022/23 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**

As of January 22, the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction is responsible and accountable for the following:

### [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*.