

Ministry of Municipal Affairs

2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan

February 2024



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Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Municipal Affairs 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 blue ink that reads "Anne Kang". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Honourable Anne Kang
Minister of Municipal Affairs
February 9, 2024

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Strategic Direction

In 2024/25, the Government of British Columbia will remain focused on providing the services and infrastructure that people depend on to build a good life. Government will continue delivering results that matter to British Columbians including helping people with costs, attainable and affordable housing, strengthened health care, safer communities, and a secure, clean and fair economy. Government will continue working collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples as it implements the Action Plan for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and delivers initiatives that advance reconciliation in ways that make a difference in communities throughout the province.

This 2024/25 service plan outlines how the Ministry of Municipal Affairs will support the government's priorities including the foundational principles listed above and selected action items identified in the January 2024 [Minister's Mandate Letter](#).

Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs helps make B.C. communities great places to live by taking leadership in supporting local governments, public libraries, not-for-profit organizations and residents to build vibrant and healthy communities that are well governed, liveable, safe and diverse as well as economically, socially and environmentally resilient.

The Ministry supports newcomers to settle and integrate into the province, facilitates economic immigration to address B.C.'s labour market needs and attracts international entrepreneurs.

The Ministry also oversees the University Endowment Lands and works with public library partners to sustain the public library system.

The effective delivery of the Ministry's mandate relies on key legislation, including the [Community Charter](#), [Vancouver Charter](#), [Local Government Act](#), [Municipal Aid Act](#), [Municipal Finance Authority Act](#), [part six of the Gaming Control Act](#), [Islands Trust Act](#), [University Endowment Land Act](#), [Provincial Immigration Programs Act](#), immigration provisions of the [Ministry of International Business and Immigration Act](#), and [Library Act](#).

Operating Environment

Employers across British Columbia and the rest of Canada continue to report that they are having challenges finding the workers they need. In response, the federal government has set ambitious national immigration targets in the coming years to help meet the labour needs of employers, including a target of 500,000 new permanent residents coming to Canada in 2025. In this context, British Columbia will welcome an increasing number of immigrants, and has requested the federal government to allow the B.C. Government to bring forward more BC Provincial Nominee Program nominations to increase immigrants with the skills that are needed by B.C. employers.

Local governments and service providers continue to be challenged by inflation, labour markets, material shortages and supply chain restrictions, impacting affordability through escalating costs. These pressures are expected to continue driving up capital project costs. Climate-driven events like wildfires, atmospheric rivers and drought conditions will continue to prioritize the rebuilding of local and provincial infrastructure with greater resilience.

Housing supply and affordability continue to be a priority in every community around the province. Recent legislative changes to support development of greater and more diversified housing supply will align housing needs, official community plans, site-specific zoning and development finance. These changes will require local governments to focus on rapidly removing barriers to housing development and preparing services, infrastructure, and amenities to support growth at the local level.

Updated emergency and disaster management legislation reflects the realities of today's world, taking into account global pandemics, security threats and climate change. Current legislation shifts from a focus on emergency response, to the four pillars of emergency management, with an emphasis on disaster risk reduction as outlined in the [Sendai Framework](#). The role of local governments in preparing for and responding to emergencies has been changing, so that local governments will now need to rethink, revisit, and revise aspects of their emergency management programs to account for Indigenous partnerships and a broader range of hazards.

The Ministry will continue to approach these challenges by strengthening relationships with local governments individually and collectively through the [Union of British Columbia Municipalities](#), by deepening understanding of the needs and realities of Indigenous communities, by renewing partnerships with provincial agencies involved in the development of urban and rural communities, and by seeking opportunities for increased partnerships with the federal government.

Economic Statement

B.C.'s economy posted modest growth last year as interest rate increases weighed on the economy, and employment continued to expand, supported by immigration. Inflation in the province continued to ease and the Bank of Canada has not raised its policy interest rate since July 2023. The impact of higher rates on borrowing costs and elevated household debt led to lower consumer spending and reduced home sales. Lumber, natural gas and coal prices declined in 2023, reducing the value of the province's goods exports. Meanwhile, there was a record number of housing starts in the province in 2023. There is uncertainty over the transmission of high interest rates to the residential construction sector and the duration of slower growth for the rest of the economy in B.C. and among our trading partners. The Economic Forecast Council (EFC) estimates that B.C. real GDP expanded by 0.9 per cent in 2023 and expects growth of 0.5 per cent in 2024 and 2.1 per cent in 2025. Meanwhile for Canada, the EFC estimates growth of 1.1 per cent in 2023 and projects national real GDP growth of 0.5 per cent in 2024 and 1.9 per cent in 2025. As such, B.C.'s economic growth is expected to be broadly in line with the national average in the coming years. The risks to B.C.'s economic outlook continue to center around interest rates and inflation, including the risk of price

increases stemming from geopolitical conflicts, the potential for interest rates remaining higher for longer, and uncertainty around the depth and timing of the impact on housing markets. Further risks include ongoing uncertainty regarding global trade policies, lower commodity prices, climate change impacts and the volatility of immigration levels.

Performance Planning

Goal 1: Strong, sustainable, and well-governed communities

Objective 1.1: Further a governance system that considers local government and provincial interests and builds strong relationships for the benefit of all people.

Provincial and local governments have responsibilities that often overlap, intersect and interact. Governments at both levels are therefore most effective when policies and services are coordinated to meet the needs of communities, regions, and the province.

Key Strategies

- Work with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) and other local government partners, to ensure the annual UBCM Convention provides a comprehensive exchange of ideas and optimizes cooperation and collaboration among the province, UBCM, individual local governments, and UBCM First Nations members.
- Support local governments in building respectful relationships and fostering meaningful and lasting Reconciliation with First Nations, consistent with the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act), as the province's framework for Reconciliation. Collaborate with UBCM on providing advice to local governments. Under the *Declaration Act*, continue to meet, engage, and collaborate with First Nation communities and Indigenous partners and organizations.
- Review and enhance the policy, legislative and education framework for local governments where needed, including working with key stakeholders and partners to move forward on provincial priorities, and make progress on established initiatives.
- Provide advice, resolve problems, and give targeted support and oversight on a range of local and regional governance matters of local government and provincial interest, both directly, and in partnership with others.
- Work with public libraries, local governments and library partner associations to sustain a public library system that is effectively governed and accountable, where provincial funding helps extend local services and improve access throughout B.C.

Discussion

Establishing relationships and developing capacity and skills are critical in the initial years of local elected officials' terms. The ministry achieves this through inter-agency and regional gatherings, establishing opportunities for dialogue and support for structured educational initiatives like the Local Government Leadership Academy.

Evolving provincial initiatives under the Declaration Act impact the context of land use management, services, governance strategies and representation for local governments. As independent governments, municipalities and regional districts in British Columbia are engaged in implementing the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action](#), and look to

the province for guidance on implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, to understand emerging obligations and support changes throughout communities.

Objective 1.2: Maintain local governments' financial sustainability so they can meet the service needs of their communities.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs supports local governments with their legislated financial responsibilities to promote the long-term sustainability of the local government system. This includes support for a system of joint borrowing that results in significant savings on interest costs, benefiting local governments of all sizes. The Ministry also recognizes the need to examine economic issues that currently impact local governments and to consider the financial system in light of these issues.

Key Strategies

- Support ministries and other partners in reviewing the local government financial system, including pressures related to costs, revenues, and property tax impacts.
- Provide advice on local government finance and statutory approvals to support sound financial management practices and stewardship, ensuring fiscal viability.
- Deliver stable, predictable, and timely grant funding for professional administration to smaller and rural local governments throughout B.C. through the Small Community Grants and Regional District Grants.
- Provide targeted funding to municipalities with over 5,000 people for community safety initiatives, through the Traffic Fine Revenue Sharing Program.
- Support the Municipal Finance Authority (MFA) in obtaining a high credit rating, and low rates for borrowing, through oversight of the *Municipal Finance Authority Act*. Support includes setting local government borrowing limits; reviewing and approving loan authorization bylaws and setting financial reporting requirements, and ensuring local government financial data is available to the MFA and the broader public.
- Work with UBCM and Ministry of Finance, through the established Memorandum of Understanding, further to the [Ensuring Local Government Financial Resiliency: Today's Recovery and Tomorrow's New Economy](#) report and recommendations.

Discussion

The emerging economic context of climate change impacts, housing affordability and increases in demand and costs for services have put some communities and their local governments under tremendous pressure for additional revenues. Local governments are primarily reliant on property tax and fees to recover the costs of critical services. As costs of these services and related infrastructure have significantly increased, it has become apparent that communities throughout B.C. have varying levels of capacity to address these costs without impacting service levels.

Community growth and increased housing supply mean local governments will need to fund expanded services and infrastructure. This envisioned future will rely on cost recovery from developers that benefit from growing communities, in addition to property taxes, fees, and grants. Recognizing this, the Ministry is working with the Ministries of Finance and Housing, and with the Union of BC Municipalities to expand the tools that are available to local governments to finance service and infrastructure costs.

In 2023, the regulation that governs grants from the Ministry to local governments was amended to enable non-application conditional grants under the Growing Communities Fund which is helping communities prepare for growth and build the amenities and services needed to support new home construction.

Objective 1.3: Support improvement of community and regional infrastructure and local government planning to further the environmental, economic and social health of communities.

Local government responsibilities for community planning, building, maintaining community infrastructure and approving developments influence the shape of communities for decades, and shape the environmental, social, and economic context for future growth and health.

Key Strategies

- Encourage resilient, efficient and effective community planning and fiscal and asset management practices to support the development of sustainable communities.
- Support local governments to make effective, integrated and collaborative choices through problem solving, guidance and program support for delivery of local and regional services such as water, recreation and economic development, and integrated sustainable land use, resiliency and infrastructure planning.
- Support the Ministries of Housing, and Transportation and Infrastructure, in advancing the Homes for People plan by supporting local government implementation of measures to accelerate development approvals.
- Support the implementation of the [CleanBC Roadmap to 2030](#) and Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy by enabling local government land use planning and infrastructure projects through initiatives such as the CleanBC Communities Fund and development of the Complete Communities Program.
- Partner with the federal government and other ministries to develop and implement community capital funding programs for local governments and First Nations that build and upgrade local infrastructure including drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, clean energy, recreation facilities and community centres.
- Support ministries and other partners to develop initiatives related to integrated planning, transit-oriented development, clean transportation, regional growth strategies, energy and the environment, and housing supply and affordability.

Discussion

Local governments face pressure to manage immediate concerns while also considering decisions about development and infrastructure that have long-term impacts. The choices local governments make in the form, quantity and location of development approvals and scale, placement and technology of infrastructure to support development have impacts that last for decades, while also meeting urgent needs for affordable homes, a healthy and clean environment, community safety and an economy that supports local jobs.

Provincial and federal resources have traditionally been accessible for major capital projects that support the current population to make infrastructure renewal more affordable. Development and growth have been expected to cover the cost of expanding infrastructure to meet the additional demand placed on services.

In response to the urgency of the housing crisis, government has made several inter-related changes to the legislative framework to unlock housing development and create more predictability in the funding of growth-related infrastructure and amenities. The ministry will work with Ministry of Housing to assess implementation of the broader categories of development cost charges and the introduction of amenity cost charges approaches, and consider measures to fine-tune development finance and monitor the impacts as needed.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
1.1 Ministry of Municipal Affairs meetings with UBCM Executive, and UBCM member local governments and First Nations, and regional meetings with local government leaders.	275+	275+	275	275

Data source: Meeting schedules (calendar meeting invites) and agendas for senior staff and Minister's meeting at UBCM Convention and throughout the year. Meetings with Ministry staff that occur at UBCM Convention are included, but other meetings are not counted.

Discussion

The ministry meets with local governments on a wide variety of topics throughout the year to hear their experiences and perspectives and look for opportunities to align interests and priorities and to resolve pressing concerns. The relationship between the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the UBCM Executive highlights the role of the Minister as a conduit of communication and advocacy between local governments collectively and the provincial Cabinet. The Minister typically joins the UBCM Executive for a portion of their meetings quarterly and collaborates with them on bringing together local and provincial government leaders for the annual UBCM Convention.

The UBCM represents 196 municipalities, regional districts, First Nations, and the Islands Trust, and is a key partner in the province’s relationship building with local governments providing a common voice for local elected officials. As the host Minister for the annual UBCM Convention, the Minister of Municipal Affairs typically meets directly with over a quarter of the UBCM members to discuss local matters. The ministry also manages over 400 meeting requests and schedules for other ministries and agencies at UBCM Convention, bringing them together with UBCM members to discuss topics of interest.

Meetings with individual local governments and regional local leaders also occur throughout the year as interest and issues arise, with both the Minister and senior executives and program staff. For example, in 2023 meetings were held with the Municipal Affairs Minister and staff, Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness senior staff and local governments to provide updates on the wildfire and drought situation, including the provincial response, and to answer local governments’ questions.

Meetings with both the Minister and senior staff have increased over the past three years with the ability to meet either online or in person depending on the issue or circumstances and the increase noted above reflects this trend.

Performance Measure	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
1.2 Municipal Finance Authority's Credit Rating	AAA	AAA	AAA	AAA

Data source: [Municipal Finance Authority](#) Ratings provided by the Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch rating agencies

Discussion

A strong credit rating of the MFA results in more affordable borrowing for major projects and reflects the sustainability of the local government financial system, which gives local governments the freedom to engage in capital projects that touch the lives of people in B.C. every day.

The value of the strong MFA credit rating increases as interest rates rise, allowing infrastructure that is financed over a 30-year term to be significantly more affordable for local governments. This results in sustainable local government services at reduced property tax cost for community members. This measure reflects both the effectiveness of provincial financial oversight and the design of the financing model that ensures regional and provincial-scale support to make payments in the unlikely event that an individual local government is unable to raise sufficient revenues to service its debt.

Goal 2: Communities and regions are resilient, with economies that work for British Columbians

Communities and regions in British Columbia are in the midst of cultural, social, environmental and economic shifts. Changing contexts for community and regional governance require both near-term adaptation and long-term thinking about a desirable future state.

Objective 2.1: Local governments are implementing strategies to improve community sustainability and affordability

Key Strategies

- Continue to leverage ministry infrastructure funding programs to encourage local governments to innovate, and to prioritize projects that deliver environmental, economic and/or social benefits.
- Partner with other ministries and other levels of government to support opportunities for local governments that improve their social and economic development. This could include urban/rural economic development, First Nations' relationships, emergency preparedness, viable transit options and reducing homelessness, as well as addressing mental health and addictions, childcare and poverty reduction.
- In collaboration with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and the Climate Action Secretariat, renew the work of the joint Provincial-UBCM Green Communities Committee to support local governments in achieving local and provincial climate objectives.
- Support ministries and work with local governments to advance integrated and sustainable land use, infrastructure and transportation planning.
- Support partner ministries in advancing initiatives and legislative supports to enable increased pace and volume of affordable housing projects in communities and the infrastructure and finance tools to enable that development.
- In partnership with the federal government and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, continue to implement the Canada Community Building Fund that came into effect on April 1, 2014. Engage in effective negotiations to establish the next agreement to ensure continuity of the Fund from 2024 onward.
- Promote the effective development, adoption, and implementation of Regional Growth Strategies.

Discussion

Local governments have significant impacts on community sustainability and affordability through sustainable land use decisions to create complete, compact and energy efficient communities and regions. These decisions can lead to more diverse housing, greenspace and renewable energy and transportation, and are an opportunity to integrate social and economic objectives that improve equity, protect against disaster risk, and cultivate new businesses and economies. Investing in efficient and innovative infrastructure reduces borrowing and operating costs into the future, leaving more resources and flexibility to respond to emerging community needs. The ministry will continue to work strategically with public libraries and service partners to make use of the \$45 million investment from March 2023, sustaining and enhancing public library services throughout the province.

Objective 2.2: Communities have the water and waste management infrastructure to thrive

Local and regional economies rely on homes and businesses having access to clean, safe drinking water and adequate waste management. This critical infrastructure provides a basis for affordable communities, public health and environmental protection, and is a priority for creating effective recovery conditions in the wake of natural disasters.

Key Strategies

- Administer funding for local governments to help them achieve provincial water and waste management objectives (for example, the joint federal/provincial Environmental Quality Program helps communities to fund essential infrastructure).
- Monitor approved projects and advise on strategies to ensure project completion.
- Provide tools and resources to local governments to assist them in conserving and protecting water resources.
- Encourage local governments to use liquid and solid waste as a resource and maximize the recovery value.
- Through the grant programs and in partnership with Asset Management BC support the implementation of sound asset management practices for public infrastructure.
- Promote the use of effective life-cycle cost approaches to support local government land use and infrastructure planning resulting in sustainable service delivery.

Discussion

Funding water and waste management projects supports communities with achieving federal or provincial government-related provincial and federal -health or environmental standards. They assist in driving best practice in infrastructure management in line with provincial objectives, including efficient use of resources, environmental protection, and responsible infrastructure management practices for sustainable service delivery. These policies influence local government practice beyond those projects that are directly funded. Water and waste management are core community services that support all other services, businesses, and the public health of residents.

Objective 2.3: Communities impacted by extraordinary emergencies are resilient and their governance, financial, planning and infrastructure are supported to recover

Given the broad impacts of the pandemic and natural disasters such as extreme heat, wildfires, and floods on communities, this area of focus is on monitoring and supporting as communities work to re-establish services, adjust financial plans, and ensure good governance.

Key Strategies

- Work with local governments, UBCM and other partners to share information, monitor local government system impacts and respond to issues that arise.
- Provide guidance, advice and problem solving for communities, including initiating actions when required (e.g., Minister’s orders, policy and legislative change), and collaborate with the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness in the development of modernized emergency management legislation.
- Ensure infrastructure projects approved through economic recovery funding and disaster recovery support meet reporting requirements and achieve completion.
- Monitor and support specific communities impacted by emergencies, to coordinate governance, infrastructure, operations, finances, and planning activities to bridge from response into recovery and beyond from events with severe environmental and economic impacts.

Discussion

The layering of widespread and regional or local emergencies leads to differing degrees of disruption and challenges for communities and their civic institutions. Developing resiliency and collaborating on recovery requires partnership among multiple orders of government and across sectors to bring communities back from extraordinary emergencies.

The Ministry is continuing to consolidate the learning and experience of supporting local governments through the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent extraordinary emergencies into its ongoing program and policy work and is proactively monitoring communities experiencing emergencies to determine any necessary governance and operations supports.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
2.1a Funded water and wastewater projects reaching completion. ¹	14	32	26	12
2.1b Funded community, culture, or recreation projects reaching completion. ²	28	49	15	1
2.1c Funded energy efficiency projects reaching completion. ³	9	22	14	11
2.1d Funded community recovery infrastructure projects reaching completion. ⁴	60	9	1	2

Data source: Program applications and approvals, Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

¹Water and wastewater infrastructure may be funded under the ICIP Green Infrastructure (Environmental Quality program) or Rural and Northern Communities streams.

²Community, culture and recreation infrastructure may be funded under the ICIP Community, Culture and Recreation, or Rural and Northern Communities streams.

³Community infrastructure that reduces greenhouse gas emissions using clean or renewable energy or that improve energy efficiency may be funded under the ICIP Green Infrastructure (CleanBC Communities Fund) stream.

⁴Includes Disaster Recovery Support (such as for local government infrastructure following November 2021 floods) and ICIP COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure stream (ICIP-CVRIS) projects. Project scope may include retrofits/repairs/upgrades to local government and Indigenous buildings, health or educational infrastructure, COVID-19 resilience infrastructure, active transportation, and disaster mitigation and adaptation infrastructure projects.

Discussion

The Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) cost-shares infrastructure investments between the governments of Canada and British Columbia, local governments and other partners over 10 years. Ministry of Municipal Affairs administers four of the five infrastructure funding streams: COVID-19 Resilience; Community, Culture and Recreation; Rural and Northern Communities; and Green Infrastructure (CleanBC Communities, Environmental Quality, and Adaptation, Resilience and Disaster Mitigation). Although application intakes have closed, construction of funded projects is expected to continue through 2027.

Projects typically take multiple years for planning, design and construction to be completed, with outcomes occurring after work has been completed. In the interim, the Ministry monitors funding and ensures accountability of projects through the review of regular progress reports, budget forecast reports and claims.

ICIP projects are delivered by local governments, First Nations, and in some cases, not-for-profits, with the province administering and monitoring grant funding. Forecasts and targets from 2023/24 to 2026/27 have changed since the last plan and reflect estimated timelines established for the projects by the project proponents. Changes reflect that more projects have been approved, and the timing of project completion varies due to project specific factors including construction delays (such as from material and labour availability, weather, etc.), time required for planning, seeking appropriate permits, and consultation, and projects proceeding more quickly than initially anticipated. Project timelines continue to be within parameters of the federal-provincial funding program.

Performance Measure	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
2.2 Funded projects from local governments, indigenous communities, and non-profits funded under the Northern Healthy Communities Fund.	70	24	20	N/A

Data source: Northern Development Initiative Trust (Deliver Agency) Program Tracking Documentation, Program Budget Allocation and LNG Canada/Coastal Gas Link Construction Schedule.

Discussion

The application-based \$25 million Northern Healthy Communities Fund (NHCF), administered by the Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT), supports initiatives that assist communities to remain healthy, sustainable, and resilient in the face of rapid and large-scale

economic development and associated need for enhanced social service readiness. Given the immediacy of the current economic development activities, the NHCF is focusing on communities adjacent to the LNG Canada and Coastal GasLink projects. While uptake was slow in some intake periods, program subscription has recently increased as NDIT staff continue to work directly with communities in support of their applications. The fund is expected to be fully expended by the 2026/27 fiscal year.

Goal 3: Communities are vibrant, inclusive, and enriched by the contributions of newcomers

Objective 3.1: International talent helps to address B.C.'s skills need and support sustainable economic development in communities across the province.

This objective focusses on how province-led immigration policy and program delivery support broader provincial goals relating to sustainable economic development. The Ministry relies upon several levers to do this, including administering the BC Provincial Nominee Program, collaboration with community and other partners, and federal advocacy. These levers afford the province the ability to prioritize occupations in essential sectors as well as regions outside the Metro Vancouver Regional District.

Key Strategies

- Align immigration policies and programs to provincial priorities and community needs.
- Continue to work with the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to identify how immigration can best meet the skills needs of B.C.'s economy.
- Use B.C.'s Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP) to help build a sustainable economy that creates opportunities for everyone by supplementing the workforce in occupations that the domestic workforce cannot fully supply by itself.
- Use the BC PNP to select nominees who will encourage regional development by settling in communities outside of major urban centers.
- Through B.C.'s PNP Entrepreneur Immigration Regional Stream, support regional communities to grow their economies and create jobs by attracting international entrepreneurs.
- Employ targeted initiatives and expanded collaboration to enhance attraction and retention of newcomers in rural, interior and coastal communities in B.C.

Discussion

The BC PNP is the only tool available to the province to directly select economic immigrants who will be coming to live and work in B.C. and create economic benefit.

The province has prioritized applications from tech sector workers for the BC PNP since 2017. In 2022, this practice was expanded to support other sectors with skill shortages, such as workers in the "care economy" (health care and early childhood education) occupations.

Historically, immigrants are attracted to major urban centres, but their skills and talents are needed across the province. Recent changes to the BC PNP enable the province to focus more on meeting B.C.'s labour market needs in areas outside of the Metro Vancouver Regional District.

In addition, the BC PNP Entrepreneur Immigration Regional stream supports the attraction of foreign entrepreneurs proposing a new business in areas with less than 75,000 population. Communities from across the province are participating in this initiative, which began as a pilot in 2019 and will transition to a permanent stream after March 2024.

Fully integrating newcomers into B.C.'s economy is essential for meeting the labour market needs over the coming decade. The Ministry supports the integration of newcomers through settlement programs that help immigrants contribute their full potential to the province (see Objective 3.2).

Objective 3.2: Provide grants and services to help communities thrive and to support newcomers to settle and integrate.

Newcomers continue to play a critical role in supporting strong and vibrant communities across this province. Offering a wide range of labour market and settlement supports help to enhance their social and economic integration while building community capacity.

Key Strategies

- Distribute \$140 million in Community Gaming Grants to not-for-profit organizations throughout B.C. to support their delivery of ongoing programs and services that meet the needs of their communities.
- Help skilled newcomers achieve employment in their field through the Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants program.
- Increase supports for newcomers to integrate into communities and workplaces with the launch of new and expanded settlement programs.

Discussion

The Community Gaming Grants branch monitors its progress in distributing grant funds requested by not-for-profit organizations that have demonstrated community support over the course of the fiscal year so that all eligible applicants may benefit wherever they are located in the province. Past grant expenditures are reviewed for compliance with the terms and conditions as well as the intended use under which it was supplied.

Newcomers arriving in B.C. can face a variety of employment barriers, including inadequate language skills and unrecognized credentials, which hinder their ability to reach their full potential in B.C.'s workforce. To address this, the Ministry has the Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants program. It offers short-term skills and language training, job placements and credentialing support tailored to individual skills and education, with a goal to help people work in jobs that match their experience and background. This personalized support for

newcomers complements efforts in other ministries to streamline international credential recognition processes for regulated occupations.

Additionally, the need for settlement supports continue to grow. With the rapid population growth in B.C. driven by temporary migration, the province has increased funding for settlement services from \$6 million annually to approximately \$26 million annually, starting in April 2024. This will help ensure newcomers have the supports they need to thrive through their settlement journey. As a result, redesigned settlement programs will launch in spring 2024 that focus on broad supports, including information, resources and referrals so clients can thrive in today’s labour market and establish connections in the workplace and community. Clients include a wide range of temporary residents and naturalized Canadian citizens. With the increased funding, supports also include a new program focused on specialized services for refugee claimants, with the goal of reducing their vulnerability and increasing community connection. These new programs replace the previous BC Settlement and Integration Services program.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
3.1 Percentage of BC Provincial Nominee Program nominees living and working in regional communities outside Metro Vancouver.	24%	33%	30%	33%	35%

Data source: Internal Ministry of Municipal Affairs tracking

Discussion

The province is planning for a long-term increase in the proportion of immigrants who live and work outside of Metro Vancouver.

An increase in the overall number of BC PNP nominations is anticipated over the next few years. Therefore, the absolute number of regional immigrants will increase even if the percentage share does not. For example, in the 2021-22 Fiscal Year, 1556 out of 6506 nominations made up the 24 per cent regional share. In the 2023-24 Fiscal Year, the total number of nominations is expected to be approximately 8200, so a 24 per cent regional share would amount to about 1968 nominations, even without a percentage increase.

Changes that the BC PNP made in November 2022 to prioritize regional applicants have been even more successful than anticipated. Also, a higher percentage of healthcare and ECE nominees are working in the regions. For these reasons, the program has increased its regional target to be at least 30 per cent in FY 2024/25 (up from a previously planned 28 per cent). While the forecast for the current fiscal year is even higher than that, the BC PNP needs to review the quality of outcomes of those regional nominees to ensure strong retention in regional communities in advance of considering increases to future targets.

Performance Measure	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
3.2 Percentage of Career Paths Clients employed in their field upon program completion.	70%	70%	70%	70%

Data source: Internal Ministry of Municipal Affairs tracking

Discussion

The Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants program continues to see steady client intake numbers, building on the stabilization from the previous fiscal. Due to the increased cost of living, some clients continue to focus on immediate employment rather than pursuing sometimes lengthy recredentialing processes. Despite this, the target of 70 per cent of clients employed in their field upon program completion continues to be reached. The Ministry will continue to monitor program trends closely and make responsive shifts as required to ensure this program is accessible for skilled arrivals to B.C.

Financial Summary

(\$000s)	2023/24 Restated Estimates ¹	2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
Operating Expenses				
Local Government	221,845	222,432	222,471	222,471
Immigration Services and Strategic Planning	24,912	40,956	42,315	42,315
Executive and Support Services	9,140	10,035	10,035	10,035
University Endowment Lands Administration Account	13,565	14,882	15,133	15,320
Total	269,462	288,305	289,954	290,141
Capital Expenditures				
Executive and Support Services	2	2	2	2
University Endowment Lands Administration Account	833	4,833	1,700	1,300
Total	835	4,835	1,702	1,302

¹ For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2023/24 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2024/25 *Estimates*.

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

Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of February 9, 2024, the Minister of Municipal Affairs is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

Islands Trust Conservancy

The Islands Trust is a federated body established in 1974 under the *Islands Trust Act*. The Trust is responsible for planning and regulating land use and protecting special places throughout the Islands Trust Area. The Islands Trust Conservancy Board consists of three Islands Trust trustees and up to three members of the public appointed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Board of Examiners

The principal goal of the provincial Board of Examiners is to improve the professional skills of local government employees throughout British Columbia. The Board is responsible for awarding scholarships and certificates to local government employees who meet the standards of qualification in local government administration. The Board is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor on the recommendation of the Minister, based on the nomination of one member by each of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, the Local Government Management Association and the Minister of Municipal Affairs.