

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

2026/27 – 2028/29 Service Plan

February 2026



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Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship 2026/27 – 2028/29 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, appearing to read 'Randene Neill'.

Honourable Randene Neill
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
February 6, 2026

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Strategic Direction

In 2026/27, the Government of British Columbia will prioritize support for people by taking action to make life better for everyone.

Despite a challenging fiscal environment due to global uncertainty, trade relationship reordering, and low resource prices, over the past year Government made significant progress on efforts to reduce costs for British Columbians, hire more doctors and nurses, and build more homes, hospitals and schools, faster. Government will continue to advance these key priorities even as tariffs, trade policies, and instability outside of the province's borders continue to put pressure on the province's finances.

Ongoing fiscal pressure means all parts of Government must continue to do their part to maximize efficiencies and make sure every dollar counts.

To respond to these extraordinary times, Government will focus on expanding trade and investment both within Canada and abroad and delivering major projects that offer good jobs and opportunities for people and communities. This focus on economic growth and prosperity is critical to delivering the revenue needed to provide services and infrastructure.

Good relationships and mutually beneficial partnerships with First Nations are critical to building a better future for everyone in British Columbia. Government will continue working diligently to implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan. Through collaboration and open dialogue, we aim to foster trust, stability and certainty for all.

This 2026/27 service plan outlines how the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship will support the Government's priorities and selected action items identified in the Minister's most recent [Mandate Letter](#).

Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (the ministry) works with other natural resource sector ministries to achieve British Columbia's goals of reconciliation, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

The ministry is directly responsible for the effective development of water, land and marine use policy and planning as well as biodiversity and ecosystem health, species-at-risk policy and program management and developing a new vision for water, land and resource management with First Nations. The ministry is responsible for the administration of water, lands, fish and wildlife while also directing work across natural resource ministries to develop solutions to sector-wide challenges in permitting, policy, data and technology and improving the management of cumulative effects. The ministry is the lead on flood, drought, landslide and dams and dikes.

To do this work the ministry is accountable for all or key parts of the [Creston Valley Wildlife Act](#), [Dike Maintenance Act](#), [Drainage Ditch and Dike Act](#), [Environment and Land Use Act](#), [Flathead](#)

[Watershed Area Conservation Act](#), [Forest and Range Practices Act](#), [Land Act](#), [Land Title Act](#), [Libby Dam Reservoir Act](#), [Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing Act](#), [Ministry of Environment Act](#), [Ministry of Forests and Range Act](#), [Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Act](#), [Skagit Environmental Enhancement Act](#), [Water Protection Act](#), [Water Sustainability Act](#), [Water Users' Communities Act](#), [Water Utility Act](#) and [Wildlife Act](#).

Economic Statement

B.C.'s economy saw mixed performance among sectors in 2025 amid U.S. tariffs and related global economic uncertainty and declining B.C. population growth. Consumer spending was strong through the first half of the year, supported by front-loaded spending ahead of U.S. tariffs (particularly for automobiles), lower inflation and interest rates, but spending has slowed in recent months. Residential construction remained above average in 2025 despite declining from the high levels of activity seen in recent years, and home sales were subdued in 2025. Meanwhile other investment indicators (such as public sector investment and commercial building permits) saw steady growth despite headwinds from economic uncertainty. B.C.'s exports have been resilient amid U.S. tariffs. The value of international exports was unchanged as lower forestry exports and coal prices offset higher values of natural gas and copper exports.

The Economic Forecast Council (EFC) estimates that B.C. real GDP grew by 1.5 per cent in 2025. In the near-term, the EFC expects B.C.'s economy to also grow by 1.5 per cent in 2026 and by 1.9 per cent in 2027, similar to the national average. For Canada, the EFC estimates growth of 1.6 per cent in 2025 and projects national real GDP growth of 1.3 per cent in 2026 and 1.9 per cent in 2027.

A volatile global trade conflict as well as immigration and population fluctuations are the main risks to the outlook. Other risks include commodity price instability, renewed inflationary pressures leading to elevated interest rates, prolonged housing market weakness, and climate change impacts.

Performance Planning

The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is accountable for integrated land and natural resource management, including objective setting for land and marine environments, effectively managing cumulative effects, and advancing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, environmental sustainability, and economic growth.

Goal 1: First Nations and the provincial government are partners in effective stewardship of water, land and natural resources

Goal 1 Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target	2028/29 Target
1.1 Number of Forum ¹ partnerships that support trusted integrated resource management	18	19	20	20

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹Targets for 2027/28 and 2028/29 may be revised in consultation with the First Nations

Performance Measure	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target	2028/29 Target
1.2 Land parcels ¹ transferred	149	202	272	322

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹Transfer of agreed-upon lands to First Nations through the implementation of land-based reconciliation

Objective 1.1: Strengthen Partnerships and Advance Engagement with First Nations in the Stewardship of B.C.'s Natural Resource Values.

Objective 1.2: Advance and modernize Land Use Planning (LUP) for sustainable natural resource management.

Objective 1.3: Achieve meaningful and tangible reconciliation through the transfer of agreed-upon land

Goal 2: British Columbia is a global leader in stewarding water, land and resources

Goal 2 Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target	2028/29 Target
2.1 Increase the amount of effective area-based conservation of lands, inland waters, and marine areas that contribute to 30% of international conservation target by 2030	19.5%	19.9%	TBD	TBD	TBD

Data Source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Performance Measure	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target	2028/29 Target
2.2 Complete strategies, agreements, orders, risk assessments and water sustainability plans with First Nations and other watershed interests to improve watershed security and health	3	3 Additional	3 Additional	3 Additional

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, manually compiled

Performance Measure	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target	2028/29 Target
2.3a Complete the Existing Use Groundwater application file review ¹	Reduce caseload to 3167 files	Reduce caseload to 2000 files	Reduce caseload to 0 files	0

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, manually compiled

¹New performance measure aligns with B.C.'s [Look West](#) strategy.

Objective 2.1: Improve stewardship of land and water to enhance wildlife management and biodiversity

Objective 2.2: Improve water stewardship and security

Objective 2.3: Advance permitting solutions that increases predictability, transparency and public trust in the permitting regime

Objective 2.4: Advance actions that reduce risk and increase community resiliency in response to increasing natural hazards

Goal 3: B.C. is a global leader in the stewardship of marine and coastal values for environmental protection, economic development and reconciliation

Goal 3 Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target	2028/29 Target
3.1 Aquatic and riparian habitat restored, enhanced, or open access to through ministry activities	1,167,160 square meters	7% increase from previous year	1% increase from previous year	1% increase from previous year	1% increase from previous year

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Performance Measure	2023/24 Baseline	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target	2028/29 Target
3.2 Coastal Marine Strategy priorities are identified and actioned, including related actions for the Marine Plan Partnership and Marine Protected Area Network Action Plan	Complete co-development of Coastal Marine Strategy with First Nations	Confirm near-term implementation priorities with First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define implementation approach with First Nations Initiate 3 net new implementation priorities 	Initiate 3 net new implementation priorities	Initiate 3 net new implementation priorities

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Objective 3.1: Address fish species declines

Objective 3.2: Promote healthy marine ecosystems and coastal communities

Financial Summary

(\$000s)	2025/26 Restated Estimates ¹	2026/27 Estimates	2027/28 Plan	2028/29 Plan
Operating Expenses				
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects	30,509	30,554	30,541	30,541
Resource Stewardship	45,930	44,173	44,160	44,160
Water, Fisheries and Coast	22,305	23,731	23,718	23,553
Reconciliation, Lands, Policy and Data	31,619	31,569	31,110	31,010
Permitting Transformation	44,528	49,959	49,946	49,946
Executive and Support Services	22,040	21,213	19,128	19,078
Crown Land Special Account	500	500	500	500
Total	197,431	201,699	199,103	198,788
Capital Expenditures				
Executive and Support Services	333	333	333	333
Total	333	333	333	333
Other Financing Transactions				
Crown Land Administration Disbursements	6,382	6,382	6,382	6,382
Habitat Conservation Trust Disbursements	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500
Habitat Conservation Trust Receipts	(6,500)	(6,500)	(6,500)	(6,500)
Total Disbursements	12,882	12,882	12,882	12,882
Total Receipts	(6,500)	(6,500)	(6,500)	(6,500)
Total Net Cash Requirements (Source)	6,382	6,382	6,382	6,382

¹ For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2025/26 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2026/27 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 March 2024, the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

Association of British Columbia Land Surveyors

Created by legislative authority *Land Surveyors Act*, s. 6 (9), as a self-governing body charged with the responsibility of setting educational requirements, examining for admission, and regulating professional land surveyors to perform legal surveys within British Columbia, Canada. Their mandate, “To protect the public interest and the integrity of the survey systems in BC by regulating and governing the practice of land surveying in the province.”

[Association of British Columbia Land Surveyors \(abcls.ca\)](https://abcls.ca)

Creston Valley Wildlife Management Authority (CVWMA)

Created through legislation, *Creston Valley Wildlife Act*, s. 16., the operational board is charged with managing the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area. The CVWMA is currently in place to ensure funding provided by BC Hydro is spent on approved projects and activities. The Board provides oversight to the CVWMA work, ensures the same accountability from delivery partners receiving a portion of the same funding, and holds fiduciary responsibility.

[Home - Creston Valley \(crestonwildlife.ca\)](https://crestonwildlife.ca)

Mackenzie River Basin Board

Established to implement the Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement (between the Government of Canada, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Northwest Territories), which is non-binding, process focused and publishes State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report (SOAER) for the Mackenzie River Basin.

[Home • Mackenzie River Basin Board \(mrbb.ca\)](https://mrbb.ca)

Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board

Created through legislation (*Muskwa-Kechika Management Act* and regulation), the M-KAB provides advice and feedback on emerging Government policies that may impact the M-KMA and on potential management activities in the area. The M-KAB reports out to the Premier and the public annually as well as monitoring activities, including resource development activities.

[Home | Muskwa-Kechika Management Area](#)

Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission

Created through legislation (*Skagit Environmental Enhancement Act*) the Commission administers the Skagit Environmental Endowment Fund. The Commission reviews, selects and funds projects which provide or maintain environmental values and recreational facilities in the Skagit watershed south of Hope, B.C.

[Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission – A transboundary watershed in Washington State, USA and British Columbia, Canada \(skagiteec.org\)](http://skagiteec.org)

Wildlife Advisory Council

Formed in 2020, the mandate is to work together to support the implementation of the Together for Wildlife Strategy, as well as advising Ministers on province-wide wildlife and habitat issues on an ongoing basis.

Appendix B: Minister Mandate Letter



January 16, 2025

Honourable Randene Neill
Minister of Water, Land and
Resource Stewardship
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Neill:

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship at a critical time for our province. Serving as a member of the executive council is a privilege and responsibility which I am confident you will fulfill with integrity and a commitment to the people of our province.

British Columbians have trusted us with a mandate to deliver for them in ways that make a tangible difference in their daily lives. They expect us to listen and learn from people of different perspectives – and work together to make things better for everyone.

Specifically, we will tackle the challenges people worry about at the kitchen table:

- **Grow the economy by creating good jobs across British Columbia.** We will collaborate with businesses, workers, and communities to attract investments in both new and traditional sectors as well as emerging sectors of the economy. This approach will bring certainty for business, security for workers, and generate the wealth needed to support the essential services British Columbians rely on.
- **Reduce costs for families** including by helping people access homes they can afford through support for first-time homebuyers, increasing the supply of rental housing stock, and stronger measures to crack down on housing speculation.

.../2

- **Strengthen health care** by expanding access to family doctors and recruiting and training more health professionals, ensuring that every British Columbian can access the care they need, no matter where they live. We will also increase access to addictions treatment and provide help for people whose struggles require intensive supports.
- **Make our neighbourhoods and communities safer** by working with law enforcement and social agencies to address street disorder, crack down on organized crime, and do all we can to ensure repeat offenders stay behind bars.

Our commitment to take action on climate change remains foundational and will be key to a healthy and prosperous BC for future generations.

Underlying all this work is our partnership with Indigenous peoples. Advancing reconciliation, implementing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and working in partnership with First Nations rights-holders to advance shared interests is the responsibility of every Minister.

Over this mandate I expect you to prioritize making progress on the following:

- In order to protect key services that British Columbians rely on, work with the Minister of Finance to review all existing Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship programs and initiatives to ensure our programs remain relevant, are efficient, are responsive to the needs of British Columbians, grow the economy, and protect our land and waters. This is important in the context of current Provincial budget constraints and the priorities of communities in the province.
- Support cross-government work in partnership with First Nations to improve timing and transparency of permitting processes to support sustainable economic growth, housing, and infrastructure while maintaining our world-leading environmental standards.
- Where opportunities are available to reach large-scale agreements on land use and critical metal and mineral development with First Nations in a manner that expedites permits, protects the environment, offers investor security, and increases prosperity for British Columbians, prioritize your Ministry's role in this work to ensure timely implementation.
- Work with communities affected by drought, or expected to face water shortages, to support community-based priority setting between industrial, agricultural, residential, and environmental uses for water. Ensure better coordination between water regulators and local communities in advance of drought to support effective response during an emergency.

- Work with your ministerial colleagues across government to balance land use that advances conservation measures and supports a diversified economic strategy, supporting a wide range of industries, including energy, technology, tourism, and resource development.
- Continue land use planning with First Nations, industry, and local communities.
- Work with the Minister of Mining and Critical Minerals to enable mining exploration and development in British Columbia's northwest in partnership with First Nations in a manner that helps achieve our Provincial commitment to protect 30% of lands and waters by 2030 and creates economic growth and opportunity in the region.
- Work collaboratively to protect critical ecosystems alongside First Nations, communities, workers, industry, organizations, and the public in a way that upholds rights and title claims, and contributes to long term, inclusive economic growth that benefits all British Columbians.
- Continue our work to restore estuaries, inter-tidal zones, and critical salmon spawning habitats.

As you are aware, we have established an accord with the BC Green Caucus that supports our shared commitment to ensuring stable governance focused on delivering progress and tangible outcomes for British Columbians. The commitments in that accord complement the direction in these mandate letters.

As a Cabinet, we will uphold the highest standards of ethics, collaboration, and good conduct in service of the public, and as a Minister of the Crown, you are expected to review, understand, and act according to the *Members' Conflict of Interest Act*. You will establish a collaborative working relationship with your Deputy Minister and the public servants under their direction, who provide the professional, non-partisan advice that is fundamental to delivering on our government's priorities. Your Minister's Office must meet the highest standards for integrity and provide a respectful, rewarding environment for all staff.

The work we have ahead takes place in a profoundly challenging geopolitical environment. Close friends and neighbours to our south are contemplating imposing draconian tariffs on our products that would hurt both Americans and Canadians. Our allies internationally face governmental instability. Hate and racism are on the rise around the world. Artificial intelligence breakthroughs with unclear implications and astonishing potential are announced daily. Global inflation, snarled supply chains, and war are threatening global economic growth and prosperity as well as the transition to a low-carbon economy.

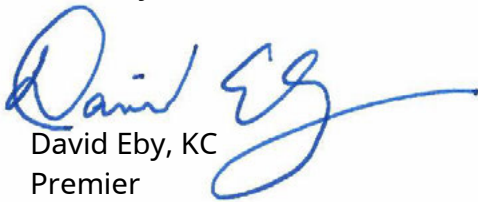
We have an obligation to protect and defend British Columbians, as well as seize opportunities, in these uncertain times.

The good news is that we have everything we need to succeed, and we will succeed. British Columbia's people – our workers, entrepreneurs, business leaders, artists, and innovators – are among the most talented in the world. We are home to world-class educational institutions and public services. Our natural beauty is unmatched, we have internationally envied resources, and we are one of the most diverse places on the planet. Your job is to help us leverage these advantages in perilous times.

Use this mandate letter to guide your work, and do not be afraid to challenge assumptions, or be innovative, bold and aggressive in achieving the goals set out for you and your Ministry by the people of this province.

Thank you for joining me in the work ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Eby", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Eby, KC
Premier