

Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness

2023/24 Annual Service Plan Report

August 2024



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Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness 2023/24 Annual Service Plan Report compares the Ministry's actual results to the expected results identified in the 2023/24 – 2025/26 Service Plan published in 2023. I am accountable for those results as reported.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bowinn".

Honourable Bowinn Ma
Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness
August 7, 2024

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Letter from the Minister

I am pleased to present the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness 2023/24 Annual Service Plan Report.

British Columbians experienced another year of unprecedented climate-related emergencies and disasters in 2023/24, including the most destructive wildfire season in B.C.'s recorded history. Ministry staff across the province rose to the challenge and were integral in response and recovery efforts, keeping people and communities informed and safe.

Despite the challenging emergency season, our ministry continued to make progress towards strengthening and modernizing emergency management, disaster and climate risk reduction, and building resiliency as we navigate our changing climate.

In November 2023, the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* came into force, replacing the *Emergency Program Act*. The new legislation modernizes how our province manages emergencies and British Columbia now has the most progressive and comprehensive emergency management framework in Canada – a major milestone in our commitments to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Over the last year, we continued to engage and collaborate with First Nations partners, communities, and other organizations. We signed new emergency management agreements that will help keep people and communities safe, and announced over \$193 million in funding to First Nations and local authorities for emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation planning and projects. We also prioritized modernizing and improving the accessibility of our tools and services, including the launch of the Disaster Financial Assistance Digital Portal, which significantly improves the timeliness of financial supports for individuals and businesses to rebuild post disaster. Additionally, we co-chaired the Premier's Expert Taskforce on Emergencies, focusing on lessons learned from the 2023 wildfires and taking steps to prepare for 2024 and future years.

The many accomplishments outlined in this report are a testament to the dedication and hard work across the ministry. In our first full year as a ministry, we made considerable progress towards our vision of a disaster resilient British Columbia, but there is still more work to do. I would like to thank ministry staff for their professionalism and continued commitment to the resiliency and well-being of individuals and communities in B.C.



Honourable Bowinn Ma
Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness
August 7, 2024

Purpose of the Annual Service Plan Report

This annual service plan report has been developed to meet the requirements of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act (BTAA), which sets out the legislative framework for planning, reporting and accountability for Government organizations. Under the BTAA, the Minister is required to report on the actual results of the Ministry's performance related to the forecasted targets stated in the service plan for the reported year.

Strategic Direction

The strategic direction set by Government in 2020 and Minister Bowinn Ma's [2022 Mandate Letter](#) shaped the goals, objectives, performance measures and financial plan outlined in the [Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness 2023/24 – 2025/26 Service Plan](#) and the actual results reported on in this annual report.

Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness is responsible to British Columbians as the primary coordinating agency for reducing climate risk impacts and responding to provincial-level emergencies and disasters. The Ministry works to advance the vision of a disaster resilient British Columbia.

The mission of the ministry is to lead provincial emergency and disaster risk management, build and foster collaborative relationships and partnerships, advance meaningful and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and support all people in British Columbia to reduce climate and disaster risk.

The ministry is responsible for providing cross-ministry coordination to enhance British Columbia's readiness and resilience towards climate and disaster risks and working towards a comprehensive and interconnected approach to achieving climate and disaster risk reduction. The Ministry leads provincial emergency management through the four-phased approach of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery in close collaboration with First Nations, local authorities, other provinces and territories, federal departments, industry, non-governmental organizations, and volunteers. Delivery of the Ministry's mandate is supported by the [Emergency and Disaster Management Act](#).

Operating Environment

In recent years, British Columbia has experienced the effects of a changing climate through an increase in the frequency, scope, and scale of climate-related emergencies and disasters – including extreme heat and cold, fire, flood, and drought. B.C. is also at greater seismic risk compared with other parts of the country and must be prepared to manage the devastating effects of a large earthquake or tsunami. The variable severity of yearly hazard seasons, and the uncertainty of when B.C. will experience an emergency or disaster continues to pose significant risk to ministry and government priorities. While recovery efforts are on-going from past events, there has been little reprieve and emergencies and disasters continue to impact individuals and communities across the province each year.

In 2023/24, B.C. experienced a historic and devastating emergency season. An unusually warm spring generated rapid snow melt leading to the flooding of many communities. The province experienced a summer with very little precipitation, resulting in severe drought in water basins across the province, and fueling conditions that promote wildfires. The summer's wildfire season was also the most destructive in the province's history in terms of total area burned. Between April 1 and October 31, 2023, over 2,200 wildfires burned over 2.84 million hectares of forest and land and B.C. was under a provincial state of emergency for 28 days, forcing over 48,000 British Columbians to evacuate their homes and communities. Throughout the emergency season, over 100 ministry staff were activated to support response and recovery efforts in the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre and Provincial Regional Emergency Operation Centres across the province.

As a result of these events and the devastating impacts across the province, the ministry experienced an increasing demand from First Nations, communities, and other organizations for emergency preparedness, mitigation planning, and response and recovery supports. The ministry continued internal planning to ensure resources are effectively managed and allocated in the event of an emergency, and that the delivery of services, programs, and supports are not adversely impacted.

Following the devastating wildfire season, the ministry created two new temporary surge teams devoted solely to supporting 2023 wildfire recovery efforts over the next 2 years. The teams are focused on supporting wildfire impacted regions and communities, assisting with development of recovery plans, leveraging and coordinating provincial subject matter expertise, and identifying policy and program solutions to address barriers to efficient and effective recovery.

The ministry also continues to navigate B.C.'s competitive labour market and has strengthened workforce planning with a focus on recruitment, retention, equity and belonging, reconciliation, health and safety, and learning and leadership development. The ministry continues to prioritize sustaining a robust organizational structure with established internal capacity and the necessary specialized and technical skillsets needed to lead emergency management in B.C.

Report on Performance: Goals, Objectives, and Results

The following goals, objectives and performance measures have been restated from the 2023/24 – 2025/26 service plan. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2024/25 – 2026/27, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

Goal 1: B.C.'s strategies and systems reduce the impacts of climate driven hazards and other emergencies and disasters.

Effective systems, proactive strategies, and planning can help reduce the impacts of climate-related hazards and other emergencies and disasters on people, communities, infrastructure, the environment, and the economy when they occur.

Objective 1.1: Lead provincial coordination for disaster risk reduction and climate readiness initiatives to improve awareness and transparency, increase resilience, and build back better from disasters.

As the Province's lead agency responsible for climate readiness and disaster risk reduction, the ministry coordinates across the provincial government and with external partners to bring together expertise to develop plans and strategies. These plans help ensure B.C.'s communities, economy, and infrastructure are prepared to meet the challenges of a changing climate and other emergency events.

Key results

- Expanded [ClimateReadyBC](#) with new data and tools, including new pages for extreme cold and winter storms, extreme heat, and water scarcity and drought, which outline the risks, potential impacts, and resources to help plan for climate-related events.
- Supported the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship with the completion of the B.C. Flood Strategy¹, [From Flood Risk to Resilience: a B.C. Flood Strategy to 2035](#).
- Completed a [Joint Federal/Provincial After Action Review](#) for Exercise Coastal Response 2023.
- Completed work to support the Provincial Business Continuity Program, including a Critical Services Framework, Readiness Index pilot, and Senior Officials Guide.

¹ Responsibility of the BC Flood Strategy was transferred from the Ministry of Forests to the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship in late 2023.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

Over the past year, the ministry worked with the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship to complete the B.C. Flood Strategy, supporting engagement efforts and providing substantive input and subject matter expertise towards the strategy. The strategy takes an all-of-society approach to flood resilience, and is aligned with the [United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). The themes of the new strategy include understanding flood risk; strengthening flood risk governance; enhancing flood preparedness, response, and recovery; and investing in flood resilience. The ministry will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, First Nations, local authorities, and other partners to implement the strategy over the coming years.

After leading Exercise Coastal Response 2023 (CR23), the ministry completed a Joint Federal/Provincial After Action Review in collaboration with Public Safety Canada. The After Action Review provides a descriptive analysis covering both federal and provincial strengths, gaps, opportunities, and areas for improvement around the six overarching CR23 objectives: continuity of government, critical infrastructure, logistics, strategic decision making, strategic communications, and mass care. The analysis highlights recommendations that will inform improvements and better practices to benefit the entire emergency management system, and the collective lessons identified from CR23. The ministry will work to implement the lessons learned from the report to improve the province's readiness for a seismic event and inform the development of future exercises.

The ministry also advanced the Business Continuity Management Program's strategic plan to ensure government is prepared to restore function quickly and ensure continuity of critical services when disasters strike. Over the last year, the ministry completed a Critical Services Framework to inform a list of critical cross-government services, and to support ministries in identifying critical business, assets, and services for their business continuity plans. Additionally, the ministry also completed a Readiness Index pilot to support the continuous improvement and evaluation of ministry business continuity programs and updated the Senior Officials Guide to support emergency preparedness for Deputy Ministers and elected officials.

Objective 1.2: Champion evidence-based approaches across the B.C. government to identify and reduce disaster and climate risks and invest in disaster risk reduction.

The Province is developing a more proactive approach to disaster risk reduction informed by Indigenous and local knowledge, climate change scenarios, equity considerations, and lessons learned from past events. Using global best practices and reliable data and information, the ministry leads cross-government efforts aimed at enhancing the province's ability to withstand future disasters and minimize impacts to people, communities, the economy, and the environment.

Key results

- Co-chaired the Premier's Expert Task Force on Emergencies and developed action-oriented recommendations to improve preparedness and response for the 2024 emergency season and future years.
- Announced over \$193 million in funding in 2023/24 to First Nations and local authorities for emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation planning and projects.
- In partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, completed the risk assessment methodology to inform the development of provincial and regional Disaster and Climate Risk and Resilience Assessments.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

Following the devastating 2023 wildfire season, the Province launched the Premier's Expert Task Force on Emergencies (Task Force) to develop action-oriented recommendations to improve preparedness and response for the anticipated 2024 emergency season and future years. The Task Force, which was active from October 2023 to February 2024, was co-chaired by the ministry and Ministry of Forests, and had members from the Premier's Office, the BC Wildfire Service, the ministry, Indigenous and local authority leadership, and other external experts. The Task Force met a number of times and engaged with emergency management partners on how the Province can better support people on the front lines of emergencies and enhance support delivery for evacuees. Recommendations will be released in early 2024/25 and are being actioned for the 2024 wildfire hazard season.

The ministry continued to invest in disaster risk reduction through targeted investments and funding programs, such as the [Community Emergency Preparedness Fund](#) (CEPF), and the [Green Infrastructure Adaptation, Resilience & Disaster Mitigation](#) sub-stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (Green ARDM). These funding programs help communities to better prepare for and mitigate the impacts of climate-related emergencies by funding local projects and initiatives. The CEPF is administered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) and is funded by the Province, while the Green ARDM is a federal-provincial cost-sharing program.

Across all streams of the CEPF, \$105.7 million in funding for 500 projects was announced in 2023/24, including 152 Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Adaptation Projects, and 348 Preparedness projects. Additionally, two infrastructure projects were announced in 2023/24 through the Green ARDM for a total of \$11 million provided by the Province. Furthermore, the City of Abbotsford received \$76.6 million to support critical upgrades to the Barrowtown Pump Station.

Additionally, the Province also provided funding for climate and disaster risk reduction initiatives, including \$2.9 million to four organizations to embark on climate and disaster risk-reduction projects – \$1.5 million to the Social Planning and Research Council of B.C., \$495,000 to Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, \$450,000 to UBC Disaster Resilience Research Network, and \$450,000 to Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
1.1 Provincial and regional risk assessments developed and implemented ¹	Foundational risk assessment methodology drafted.	Initiate a joint provincial scale Disaster and Climate Risk and Resilience Assessment (DCRRA) in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV) and co-developed with Indigenous partners.	Foundational risk assessment methodology completed. Joint provincial scale DCRRA initiated in partnership with ENV and development underway in collaboration with First Nations partners.

Data source: Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness and Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, manually compiled.

¹ For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2024/25 – 2026/27, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

The ministry and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy have a joint mandate to advance B.C.’s commitments to the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction by integrating the assessment of disaster and climate risk and resilience to support the development of a subsequent province-wide disaster and climate risk reduction plan. This performance measure tracks the ministry’s progress toward completing provincial and regional Disaster and Climate Risk and Resilience Assessments (DCRRA).

In 2023/24, the ministry completed the risk assessment methodology, providing a new approach to evaluating disaster and climate risks, as well as B.C.’s resilience, in the face of a changing climate. The methodology incorporates requirements outlined in the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* and recognizes the varying impacts of risks to diverse and equity-denied populations and respectfully upholds local and Indigenous knowledges.

Building off the methodology, the ministry initiated the provincial scale DCRRA. Through engagement and collaboration with First Nations and other partners, hazards were selected to assess at a provincial level. These include coastal and riverine flooding, extreme heat, drought, wildfire, earthquake, and a scenario of cascading and compounding risks.

The ministry has achieved the 2023/24 target of initiating the provincial DCRRA. During the year the ministry hosted four virtual engagement sessions on the DCRRA with twenty-nine First Nations participants. Topics covered the DCRRA framework, values as they relate to risk and resilience, top hazards and priorities for communities, and how best to uphold local and Indigenous knowledges when assessing risk and resilience.

The ministry will publish the provincial DCRRA in 2024/25 on [ClimateReadyBC](#).

Goal 2: Indigenous Peoples are true partners and leaders in emergency and disaster risk management.

In line with the B.C. Government's commitments to true and lasting reconciliation, the Ministry will include First Nations in all four phases of emergency management and improve the cultural safety of emergency services provided to Indigenous Peoples.

Objective 2.1: Include First Nations during all phases of emergency management, including all levels of planning, decision making, and implementation.

Effective emergency management requires involvement and expertise of First Nations and Indigenous organizations across B.C. The ministry works with Indigenous governing bodies through government-to-government relationships to foster shared leadership across all phases of emergency management, including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery, to build their future resilience.

Key results

- Signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) between First Nations' Emergency Services Society (FNESS), BC Wildfire Service, and the Office of the Fire Commissioner and developed mutual commitments to ensure collaboration in all phases of emergency management.
- Signed the Transboundary Flood Initiative, a multi-government agreement with the Sumas, Matsqui, and Leq'á:mel First Nations, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Lummi Nation, the City of Abbotsford, and Whatcom County, Washington to advance flood mitigation in the Nooksack River and Sumas River Watersheds.
- Signed the Sumas River Flood Mitigation Collaborative Framework, a multi-government agreement with the Semá:th, Matsqui, and Leq'á:mel First Nations, the City of Abbotsford, and the City of Chilliwack to make the Sumas Prairie more resilient to flooding.
- Signed the Fraser River Debris Trap Co-Management Agreement with the Shxw'ōwhámél First Nation, collaboratively overseeing infrastructure that prevents flood damage along the Fraser River.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The ministry signed the Fraser River Debris Trap Co-Management Agreement, a first of its kind in B.C., that formally recognizes both the Province and the Shxw'ōwhámél First Nation as collaboratively overseeing provincially owned public safety infrastructure. The debris trap reduces the volume of woody debris and waste material flowing into the lower reaches of the Fraser River and Salish Sea, and reduces risk to human safety, navigation, and downstream

infrastructure that the waste may cause. Previously, the debris trap was the responsibility of the Province and the new agreement now gives the Shxw'ōwhámél First Nation a role in the stewardship and operation of the debris trap and creates opportunity for employment and economic development for the First Nation and its members. The agreement represents another step the ministry has taken in the past year toward advancing reconciliation with First Nations and including First Nations in all phases of emergency management.

The ministry also signed two multi-government agreements to support flood mitigation and resiliency in the Nooksack River and Sumas River Watersheds. The Transboundary Flood Initiative provides a collaborative framework to identify and pursue actions for flood-risk reduction and habitat restoration on the flood-prone Nooksack and Sumas watersheds, and advances co-operation and collaboration with Indigenous governments by integrating Indigenous knowledge into the agreement. Additionally, the Sumas River Flood Mitigation Collaborative Framework sets a structure for all partners to work efficiently and collaboratively towards solutions and approaches to address the challenge of flooding risks in the Sumas Prairie.

Flood-mitigation approaches and designs in B.C. will align with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The agreements support the ministry's commitment to include First Nations in all phases of emergency management and also ensures Indigenous knowledge is incorporated into planning, decision making, and implementation of approaches.

Objective 2.2: Better shape the delivery of services to Indigenous Peoples to consider both the needs and the cultural perspectives of individual members and communities.

Actions and decisions taken by the ministry are guided by the B.C. Government's commitment to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The ministry recognizes the diversity of First Nations in B.C. and respects self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. Services, programs, and training are sustained to improve cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Key results

- Signed a LOU with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), strengthening collaborative relationships to realize culturally safe, community-centred emergency management services and supports such as Indigenous emergency management programs and training and evacuee support options.
- Provided \$580,000 under the Indigenous Cultural Safety and Cultural Humility Training stream of the CEPF for local governments and First Nations to make emergency management and supports more inclusive of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people.
- Provided \$6 million to the T̓silhqot̓in National Government to support implementation of the Collaborative Emergency Management Agreement, and for an extensive

feasibility study to determine the suite of emergency infrastructure required in the territory.

- Facilitated the Indigenous Agency Working Group (IAWG) to support the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre during the 2023 wildfire season, focusing on accommodation for displaced First Nations communities, and revised the Terms of Reference for the IAWG to meet year-round, enhancing collaboration across partner organizations and providing strategic guidance for planning, response, and recovery.
- Advanced culturally safe approaches in emergency management through the development of new guidance for First Nations Community Navigators, and co-developing training for ESS responders with First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), through trauma informed practice.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

In November 2023, the ministry and NVIT signed an LOU to ensure cultural safety for Indigenous evacuees during a mass evacuation event, and to develop new culturally safe emergency management training and supports. Additionally, the ministry worked with NVIT to support interest in providing surge support to other jurisdictions and the ministry offered Emergency Support Services (ESS) training to approximately 30 NVIT staff completed in June 2023. This work advances cultural competency in the event of an emergency, and helps ensure that services meet the unique social, cultural, and linguistic needs of Indigenous Peoples.

Under the Indigenous Cultural Safety and Cultural Humility Training stream of the CEPF, approximately \$580,000 was provided for 22 local projects. Projects include training programs for emergency management staff, volunteers, and elected officials that build cultural competency for collaborative emergency management. The training will contribute to emergency management programs that are centred in cultural safety and ensure that delivery of services to Indigenous Peoples consider both the needs and the cultural perspectives of individual members and communities.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
2.1 Percentage of First Nations attending First Nations Emergency Management Partnership Tables ¹	38%	41%	37%

Data source: Partnerships, Engagement and Legislation Division, Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness

¹PM 2.1 targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as 46% and 51%, respectively. This performance measure is updated and replaced in the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

In 2018, the First Nations Emergency Management Partnership Tables were created as regional forums for First Nations and provincial agency emergency managers to share knowledge and provide guidance on emergency management issues and initiatives.

Every First Nation community in B.C. is invited to participate, along with key support organizations, including FNESS, Indigenous Services Canada, FNHA, BC Wildfire Service, and

many other non-governmental, provincial, or federal partners, as determined by First Nations. Partnership Table agendas are co-developed with First Nations communities and outcomes and recommendations are included in an annual summary report that is shared back with participating communities for transparency and follow up.

Partnership Tables were held in Fall 2023 in Port Hardy (Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw First Nation and Kwakiutl First Nation), and Leq'á:mel First Nation. Partnership Tables were also held in Spring 2024 in Williams Lake (Williams Lake First Nation), Burns Lake (Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation), Kelowna, and Fort Nelson (Fort Nelson First Nation).

For 2023/24, 37% of First Nations attended five Partnership Tables across the province, which was short of the Ministry's target of 41% and a 1% decrease compared to 2022/23. Participation increased in some regions and decreased in other regions, largely due to competing and emergent priorities in communities, a historic wildfire season and additional topic specific engagement and collaboration opportunities offered by the Ministry.

Where First Nations are unable to attend, continued local and regional dialogue around emergency management topics occurs through other venues, such as the annual Emergency Management Forum, seasonal readiness calls/meetings, in-person community visits, and First Nations specific coordination calls.

This performance measure has been removed from the 2024/25 Ministry Service Plan due to on-going negotiations to replace the bi-lateral service agreement with a new multi-lateral service agreement. It is anticipated a new model will be introduced in 2024/25 or 2025/26 as result of these discussions.

Goal 3: B.C. has modernized and enhanced emergency management in all four phases (prepare, mitigate, respond, and recover).

Government is expected to follow modern and effective practices in emergency management. This goal addresses the Ministry's role in supporting Indigenous communities, local authorities, and individuals to prepare for emergencies, mitigate the risks of a changing climate, respond to disasters, and recover quickly after they occur.

Objective 3.1: Modernize B.C.'s emergency and disaster risk management legislation.

Modernizing the province's emergency management legislation is a crucial step in implementing the Sendai Framework, emphasizing the importance of disaster risk reduction, and strengthening the four phases of emergency management – mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Key results

- Repealed and replaced the *Emergency Program Act* with the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*, updating B.C.'s emergency management legislation to reflect the realities of the modern world including global pandemics, security threats and climate change, and shifting from focusing on emergency response to the four phases of emergency management.
- Completed the first regulation under the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* – the Emergency and Disaster Management Regulation – to support civil liability and employment protections for volunteers involved in critical incidents and emergencies.
- Initiated the development of other regulations to support the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*, including broad public engagement and consultation and cooperation with First Nations.
- Supported Indigenous partners, local authorities, and other organizations and interest groups in the implementation of the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*, including through engagement, workshops, webinars, and guidance materials.
- Committed \$18 million to support First Nations communities, municipalities, and regional districts to implement Indigenous engagement requirements and implemented the Indigenous Engagement Requirements Funding Program to offer funds to all First Nations and local authorities in B.C.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* came into force on November 8, 2023, replacing the *Emergency Program Act* and marking a major milestone in B.C.'s commitment to implement the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The ministry led the modernization of the legislation which included regular consultation and cooperation with First Nations, engagements with Indigenous partners and the broader public, and collaboration with other ministries, local authorities, critical infrastructure owners, and public sector agencies. The new legislation shifts from primarily response focussed to include all four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. B.C. now has the most progressive and comprehensive emergency management framework in Canada.

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* also supports the ministry's commitment to Indigenous Peoples being true partners and leaders in emergency and disaster risk management. This includes recognition of the authority of Indigenous Peoples to make laws in relation to emergency management, as well as the importance of Indigenous advice, input, and stewardship activities in emergency management. Promoting cultural safety in emergency management is also recognized through incorporating relevant actions in emergency management plans, policies and programs.

While some powers and duties under the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* are already in effect, others will be brought into force through regulations anticipated to be introduced

through 2026. Following adoption of the new legislation, the ministry completed engagement to help inform the development of supporting regulations.

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* also outlines obligations that require local authorities, the Province, and critical infrastructure operators to consult and cooperate with Indigenous governing bodies. To support this work, the ministry released [interim guidance](#) to support Indigenous engagement requirements, and committed \$18 million to support First Nations, municipalities, and regional districts with implementing the requirements via the [Indigenous Engagement Requirements Funding Program](#). The funding will be used to support relationship-building across jurisdictions through consultation and cooperation with Indigenous governing bodies and ensure the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and cultural safety across emergency management practices. The funding also supports policy improvements that reflect the lived experience of Indigenous Peoples and address the disproportionate effects on Indigenous Peoples during emergency events.

Objective 3.2: Support Indigenous communities, local authorities, and individuals to access the tools and resources needed to manage emergencies and disasters in alignment with local conditions and needs.

The ministry plays a key role in providing programs, systems, and resources that people need to prepare themselves and their communities for disasters and manage emergencies when they occur.

Key results

- Continued public education on emergency preparedness through PreparedBC social media campaigns, public engagement, and guides, including release of the Severe Winter Weather and Storm Preparedness Guide.
- Conducted two education campaigns and updated PreparedBC earthquake preparedness resources to inform the public and partners about the Canadian Earthquake Early Warning system and what to do if an alert is received.
- Launched a monthly newsletter, Four Pillars Newsletter, to inform emergency management partners, First Nations, local governments, and other non-government organizations on important emergency management updates, funding information and opportunities, and other resources.
- Partnered with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc to establish evacuee accommodations for up to 300 people and deliver culturally safe supports.
- Through the Collaborative Emergency Management Agreement with T̓silhqot̓in National Government, supported Rustic Group Lodging at Riske Creek, preparing for delivery of culturally safe lodging for evacuees.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

Education campaigns increase the resilience of British Columbians by providing accurate, meaningful, and relevant emergency preparedness information. It also supports Indigenous communities, local authorities, and other partners in their preparedness efforts and actions. Over the last year, the ministry continued to develop and deliver inclusive public education initiatives to promote preparedness, including the delivery of three PreparedBC campaigns aimed at increasing individual and community-level preparedness: Tsunami Preparedness Week/High Ground Hike; Emergency Preparedness Week; and ShakeOut. The ministry also expanded on existing preparedness guides with the addition of Severe Winter Weather and Storm Preparedness Guide.

B.C. is at an increased risk of seismic activity compared to other parts of Canada. To bring awareness to this risk and ways people can protect themselves during an earthquake, the ministry worked with Natural Resources Canada to develop an Early Earthquake Warning system with a public education campaign. The ministry also coordinated provincial seismic risk management initiatives including engagement with First Nations and training on the earthquake hazard maps, also referred to as seismic microzonation maps, for the Metro Vancouver area. The maps allow people living in Metro Vancouver to better understand their specific earthquake hazards and better prepare themselves for a seismic event. The ministry continues to work with communities across the province to develop seismic microzonation maps for public release.

The ministry continued to evolve the public alerting system to enhance First Nations and local authority preparedness and response, and in 2023 completed and initiated implementation of program guidance for internal and external partners to support effective issuance of emergency alerts. The 2023 wildfire season resulted in an estimated 208 evacuation orders and 386 evacuation alerts which together impacted roughly 185,000 people. The Province issued 24 Broadcast Intrusive Alerts in support of community evacuation orders during the wildfire season, delivering critical alerts to people in B.C. through television, radio, and wireless devices.

Objective 3.3: Support urgent coordinated government response and recovery to communities in times of emergency.

The ministry applies lessons learned from past events and supports coordinated emergency and disaster response and recovery efforts to improve outcomes for people and communities.

Key results

- Provided urgent emergency and disaster response to individuals and communities through ESS evacuee support, Broadcast Intrusive Alerting, and coordinated support to communities.
- Provided \$1.97 million across three Regional Districts impacted by 2023 wildfires to support investments in additional resources and capacity for recovery activities, communications, community engagement, and Indigenous cultural coordination.

- In January 2024, completed the review and adjudication of all Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) private sector applications for the atmospheric river of 2021, representing 2,298 applications and over \$33 million in payments issued.
- Completed the DFA Digital Portal, modernizing the application process for private sector applicants impacted by eligible disasters.
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Service BC to support British Columbians with accessing and obtaining information related to DFA and ESS through in-person, mobile, virtual, and Provincial Contact Centre services supports.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The DFA program is offered by the ministry to support individuals and businesses in the aftermath of an eligible disaster with financial assistance to communities for damaged infrastructure and members of the public, small businesses, farms, and charitable organizations to restore uninsurable losses that are essential to homes, livelihoods, or community services, when applicable.

The ministry began modernizing the DFA program in response to the flooding caused by the atmospheric river event in 2021. The ministry completed the DFA Digital Portal, modernizing the application process for private sector applicants impacted by eligible disasters and replacing the old paper-based system. The new portal supports timely decision making for disaster financial assistance. This will help ensure individuals, organizations, and communities impacted by eligible disasters can focus on recovery efforts, such as rebuilding infrastructure or replacing equipment.

The ministry also continued to process DFA applications from public and private sector applicants. The DFA program is split into two sectors: 1) private, which includes homeowners, residential tenants, charitable organizations, farm owners, and small businesses, and 2) public for communities. Over the year, the ministry completed the review and adjudication of all private sector DFA applications for the 2021 Atmospheric River event. Since the DFA eligible event was declared, the ministry processed a total of 2,298 applications and issued \$33 million in payments. For public sector DFA applications, the ministry supported the ongoing administration of 10 open public sector DFA programs for eligible disasters in 2017 through 2023. Additionally, river flooding in 2023/24 caused by heavy rain or melted snow resulted in 35 DFA applications received and payments of \$267,000 issued. Following the 2023 wildfire season, the ministry declared a DFA eligible event for the public sector to support First Nations and local governments cover disaster-related losses to infrastructure that is not covered by insurance.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
3.1 Percentage of eligible communities onboarded and utilizing the Evacuee Registration and Assistance (ERA) tool ^{1,2}	35%	50%	83%

Data source: Regional Operations Division, Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness

¹PM 3.1 targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as 75% and 100%, respectively. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2024/25 – 2026/27, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

The ERA tool, a digital platform that supports ESS, increases the efficiency and speed of service delivery and payments for evacuees displaced by emergency or disaster events. ERA enables the ability to transfer funds directly to evacuees for things like food and incidentals and provides evacuees with increased ability to make decisions that align with their personal preferences, culture, and health needs.

In 2023/24, the ministry continued to engage with communities to onboard and train on the ERA tool. The ministry exceeded the 2023/24 target and achieved 83% of communities onboarded to the tool – 33% above the target for the year. The ministry onboarded 1-2 communities per month to the ERA tool throughout 2023/24.

The ministry's success in this measure can be attributed to extensive engagement with communities to demonstrate the value of the tool, providing training and support, and ensuring the program is administered in a culturally safe manner and meets the needs of those receiving support. The ministry also implemented strategies to support ERA, including virtual support by ESS teams in non-impacted communities, deployment of ministry ERA specialists to communities, and Service BC surge support. In fall 2023, the ministry added four Regional Planning Officers to support communities with all ESS delivery tools, including ERA. During this time the ministry also held direct in-person and virtual engagement sessions with First Nations, partners and communities leading to additional conversation about the ERA tool, training, and support.

While the ministry has increased utilization of the ERA tool significantly since launch in 2022/23, it is limited by voluntary uptake and requires communities to opt in to use the tool. ERA use cannot be mandatory in all situations as some emergencies may limit access to power or internet and paper-based forms will always remain as a business continuity tool. Not all communities onboarded are using the tool consistently, however improved, and more flexible training opportunities are anticipated to support this challenge.

Financial Report

Financial Summary

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations ¹ (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
Operating Expenses					
Emergency Management and Climate Readiness	50,844	91,280	142,124	130,628	-11,495
Executive and Support Services	13,519	0	13,519	25,015	11,495
Emergency Program Act	36,420	401,459	437,879	437,879	0
Sub-total	100,783	492,739	593,522	593,522	0
Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual ²	0	0	0	-78	-78
Total	100,783	492,739	593,522	593,444	-78
Ministry Capital Expenditures					
Emergency Management and Climate Readiness	524	0	524	25	(499)
Total	524	0	524	25	(499)

¹ "Other Authorizations" include Supplementary Estimates, Statutory Appropriations and Contingencies. Amounts in this column are not related to the "estimated amount" under sections 5(1) and 6(1) of the *Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act* for ministerial accountability for operating expenses under the Act.

² The Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual of \$0.078 million is a reversal of accruals in the previous year.

Appendix A: Progress on Mandate Letter Priorities

The following is a summary of progress made on priorities as stated in Minister Bowinn Ma's 2022 Mandate Letter.

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2024
<p>Support urgent coordinated government response to communities in times of emergency and review systems to ensure they are prepared for urgent response, incorporating lessons learned from previous emergencies.</p>	<p>This work is in progress and on-going and detailed throughout this report. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting response efforts during the 2023 emergency season. • Completing a joint Federal/Provincial After Action Review for Exercise Coastal Response 2023. • Delivery of Seasonal Hazard Preparedness sessions to brief local government and First Nations partners, critical infrastructure providers, non-profit organizations, and federal and provincial agency representatives on forecasted hazards and associated risks.
<p>Complete work to co-develop and introduce modernized emergency management legislation that aligns with our government's commitments to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, to strengthen our ability to protect people and communities from disasters and emergencies.</p>	<p>This work is complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>Emergency and Disaster Management Act</i> came into force in November 2023. • Further details can be found under Objective 3.1.
<p>In partnership with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and in consultation with communities and Indigenous Peoples, advance B.C.'s commitments to the Sendai Framework by leading the development of a provincial hazard risk vulnerability assessment that builds on B.C.'s Preliminary Strategic Climate Risk Assessment and integrates climate and disaster risk. This will support development of a subsequent province-wide disaster and climate risk reduction plan that assesses risk</p>	<p>This work is in progress. Further details can be found under Goal 1.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2023/24 the ministry completed the risk assessment methodology, and selected hazards that will inform the subsequent provincial Disaster and Climate Risk and Resilience Assessment (coastal and riverine flooding, extreme heat, drought, wildfire, earthquake, and a scenario of cascading and compounding risks).

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2024
<p>priorities and systematically coordinates and implements cross-government interventions consistent with those priorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provincial Disaster and Climate Risk and Resilience Assessment is underway and is expected to be released in 2024/25.
<p>Establish Indigenous Peoples as true partners and leaders in emergency management by including First Nations from the beginning and at all levels of planning, decision making, and implementation.</p>	<p>This work is in progress. Further details can be found throughout this report. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry, BC Wildfire Service, and the Office of the Fire Commissioner have signed a LOU with First Nations' Emergency Services Society to strengthen cross-agency collaboration, improve service to Indigenous Peoples, and to advance Indigenous-led approaches in emergency management. The ministry introduced modernized emergency management legislation developed in consultation and cooperation with First Nations partners and has developed guidance materials for internal and external audiences to support meeting Indigenous engagement requirements outlined in the <i>Emergency and Disaster Management Act</i>. Coordinated annual Partnerships Tables across the province, providing a regional forum for First Nations emergency managers to build relationships, share knowledge, and inform emergency management service delivery efforts.
<p>Lead cross-ministry coordination for our government's work to enhance B.C.'s resilience, such as our work through the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy, the BC Flood Strategy, and other cross-government efforts, including work to build back better from recent disasters by:</p>	<p>This work is in progress. Further details can be found throughout this report. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BC Flood Strategy: This work is complete. The B.C. Flood Strategy was released in March 2024. Further details can be found under Objective 1.1.

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing guidance to ministries delivering risk reduction and resilience initiatives regarding prioritization of efforts to help ensure that investments align with risk assessments; and • Improving transparency and awareness of these initiatives and their impacts by developing new tools for the public to access information on existing risks and work to improve resilience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy: The ministry continues to work with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy on this initiative. This work is in progress and further detailed under Goal 1. • ClimateReadyBC: The ministry launched the platform in February 2022, providing a publicly accessible disaster and climate risk resource hub. Work is on-going to add new information and resources as they become available. Further details can be found under Objective 1.1.