

Ministry of Labour

2023/24
Annual Service Plan Report

August 2024



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Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Labour 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 black ink, which appears to read "H. Bains". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Honourable Harry Bains
Minister of Labour
August 9, 2024

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Letter from the Minister

It is my privilege to present the Ministry of Labour's 2023/2024 Annual Service Plan Report.

The Ministry of Labour's goals include having strong and fair labour laws and standards; ensuring world-class worker health and safety; supporting an inclusive, sustainable and innovative economy; and providing effective, client-centred service delivery.

The Ministry of Labour is helping people build a better future here in B.C., including those whose work might be considered precarious. A key highlight throughout 2023/24 was the continued engagement with workers, platform companies, labour organizations, business associations, non-profit organizations, researchers and academic experts about app-based ride-hailing and delivery service work.

In November 2023, the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Workers Compensation Act* were amended to allow for the development of regulations to support app-based ride-hail and delivery workers. This is a new world of employment, and we lead the country in protecting workers in this growing sector.

Worker health and safety continue to be a top priority for my Ministry and WorkSafeBC. For example, in January 2024, the Ministry amended the *Workers' Compensation Act* so that asbestos abatement contractors who operate in B.C. must be licensed and must ensure their workers are trained and certified to perform this work. B.C. is the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement a formal licensing requirement like this.

In February 2024, the Ministry introduced legislative changes to enshrine the government's commitment to tie the minimum wage to inflation. The *Employment Standards Act* now provides increased certainty and predictability to workers and businesses alike.

As the forest sector transitions towards a new approach for sustainable forest management, the Ministry continued to support older workers and contractors through the Bridging to Retirement Program, including funding to transition to retirement, while helping retain and create jobs for younger workers.

As this is my last Ministry of Labour Annual Service Plan message before I retire, I want to say that it has been the honour of a lifetime to serve as Minister of Labour for our province. I am grateful for the opportunity to represent working people and all British Columbians and I look forward to seeing the Ministry continue to support vulnerable workers and build healthier and safer workplaces.



Honourable Harry Bains
Minister of Labour
August 9, 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 Bain's 2022 Mandate Letter [Mandate Letter](#) shaped the goals, objectives, performance measures and financial plan outlined in the Ministry of Labour 2023/24 – 2025/26 [Service Plan](#) and the actual results reported on in this annual report.

Purpose of the Ministry

To build a better British Columbia, the [Ministry of Labour](#) promotes fair, healthy and safe labour and employment relationships in support of a strong, sustainable and inclusive economy.

In this context, the Ministry has overall responsibility for British Columbia's labour and employment statutes – including the *Labour Relations Code*, the *Employment Standards Act*, the *Workers Compensation Act* and the *Temporary Foreign Worker Protection Act* – and for the effective administration and enforcement of those statutes. The Ministry houses the [Employment Standards Branch](#), the [Workers' Advisers Office](#), the [Employers' Advisers Office](#) and the [Bridging to Retirement Program](#). The Ministry has legislative responsibility for [WorkSafeBC](#), and for the Ministry's three tribunals: the [Labour Relations Board](#), the [Employment Standards Tribunal](#), and the [Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal](#).

The Employment Standards Branch and the Ministry's three administrative tribunals manage complaints and issues that have been brought before them. The Workers' Advisers Office and the Employers' Advisers Office provide advice and advocacy for workers and employers with respect to issues under the *Workers Compensation Act*. In all cases, timely and accurate disposition of those complaints or issues is an essential component of a fair and balanced system of labour and employment laws that is readily accessible to all stakeholders.

The Bridging to Retirement Program provides support to B.C. forestry workers impacted by old growth harvesting deferrals by assisting workers who are 55 or older to transition to retirement, creating opportunities for younger workers.

For more information about the Ministry's areas of responsibility and key initiatives, visit the [Ministry of Labour](#) website.

Operating Environment

The Ministry of Labour operates in a changing environment shaped by shifting economic conditions and demographics, an increasingly diversified labour market and ever-evolving workplace norms and expectations. The work of the Ministry is also impacted by other factors such as the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, labour shortages, changing demands for foreign workers, and rising inflationary pressures. These challenges have had significant implications for the economy and for employer/employee relations and are expected to have continuing impacts on the Ministry in this reporting cycle.

The goals and objectives in the Ministry 2024/25 Service Plan outline key priorities and deliverables, including measures used to track and assess performance over time in key program areas.

Economic Statement

Following two years of strong recovery from the pandemic, economic growth in British Columbia moderated in 2023. After expanding by 3.9 per cent in 2022, B.C.'s real GDP increased by 1.6 per cent in 2023, the second highest growth rate among provinces (tied with Saskatchewan and Ontario) and outperforming the national average. Growth in B.C.'s real GDP was supported by service-producing industries such as real estate, rental and leasing; professional, scientific and technical services; transportation and warehousing; and healthcare. Despite steady growth in the construction and mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction sectors, output for goods-producing industries decreased in 2023, partly due to lower manufacturing activity. While B.C.'s economy continued to expand in 2023, some sectors such as transportation and warehousing and accommodation and food services have yet to fully return to pre-pandemic levels.

B.C.'s labour market continued to grow in 2023, with employment growth of 1.6 per cent and wages and salaries increasing by 6.9 per cent. However, B.C.'s unemployment rate rose to 5.2 per cent in 2023 from 4.6 per cent in the previous year as the labour force, supported by record high immigration, grew faster than employment. High interest rates tempered consumer spending on goods in 2023 and nominal retail sales edged down 0.1 per cent. In 2023, price pressures in B.C. moderated among a broad number of goods and services but remained elevated. B.C.'s inflation rate averaged 3.9 per cent in 2023, down from 6.9 per cent in 2022. B.C. home construction activity strengthened in 2023. Housing starts totaled 50,490 units in 2023, the highest annual pace on record and up 8.1 per cent compared to the previous year. High interest rates continued to weigh on home sales activity last year. B.C. MLS home sales decreased by 9.2 per cent in 2023, while the MLS average home sale price was 2.6 per cent lower than 2022. On the external front, B.C.'s international merchandise exports declined by 13.5 per cent in 2023, due to weaker global demand and lower commodity prices compared to 2022.

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: Strong and fair labour laws and standards

Objective 1.1: Update and modernize B.C. labour laws to ensure they are responsive to the needs of the modern workplace.

Key results

- Proposed solutions and established enabling legislation to ensure appropriate employment standards and other protections for workers in B.C.'s gig economy.
- Introduced amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* to implement Government's commitment to tie the minimum wage to inflation.
- Appointed an independent panel to review and provide recommendations for modernizing and improving the *Labour Relations Code*.
- Continued to prioritize opportunities for Ministry engagement with Indigenous Peoples as part of the ongoing effort to implement the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The Ministry made significant progress updating and modernizing B.C. labour laws to ensure they are responsive to the needs of the modern workplace.

In November 2023, the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Workers Compensation Act* were amended to allow for the development of regulations to support app-based ride-hail and delivery workers. The Ministry has continued to engage with platform companies, app-based ride-hail and delivery workers, labour organizations and other parties in developing the regulatory changes.

In February 2024, the Ministry introduced legislative changes to enshrine Government's commitment to tie the minimum wage to inflation in law. The *Employment Standards Act* now provides increased certainty and predictability to workers and businesses by providing for annual increases to minimum wage rates based on the average change in B.C.'s Consumer Price Index for the previous calendar year.

The *Labour Relations Code* requires the Minister to appoint a committee of special advisors to review the Code every five years. A review was required in 2024, and, in February 2024, the Minister struck an independent three-person panel tasked with reporting back to the Minister

with recommendations to help ensure B.C.'s labour laws keep up with the needs of today's workplaces, provide stable labour relations and support people's collective bargaining rights.

This year, the Ministry of Labour Reconciliation Working Group was established to empower and engage employees to understand, implement and champion the obligations outlined in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2022/2023 Baseline	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
1.1 Percentage of Employment Standards Branch complaints resolved within 180 days	New baseline	20%	50%	35%

Data source: Ministry of Labour Employment Standards Branch internal data.

PM 1.1 targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as 80% and 85%, respectively. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 - 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

This is a long-established Performance Measure for tracking the percentage of complaints to the Employment Standards Branch resolved within 180 days. It supports the goal of strong and fair labour laws and standards that protect vulnerable workers and provides for the fair and timely resolution of complaints involving non-compliance with the law.

The Branch has experienced a significant increase in demand for its services in recent years, the result of several factors and improvements. In 2019, the Ministry removed the Self-Help Kit, which was a barrier to access to justice for workers, making it easier to submit complaints. A new investigation model was implemented, and the statutory recovery period was doubled from six months to one year. The *Temporary Foreign Worker Protection Act* and the associated Temporary Foreign Worker Registry was also launched. Pandemic response actions – including temporary layoff variances, vaccination leave, and illness and injury leave – also resulted in new work for the Branch. These changes have led to higher complaint volumes, and, in turn, a longer period of time required to assign, investigate and resolve cases.

The Ministry remains committed to resolving complaints in a timely manner. The Branch continues to implement system improvements and a robust recruitment and retention strategy to enable the timelier resolution of complaints.

Goal 2: Ensure that labour laws are communicated and enforced through effective, client-centered service delivery

Objective 2.1: Continue to implement new and updated Ministry processes to improve service delivery.

Key results

- Made changes to the Workers' Advisers Office (WAO) branch structure, including changes to the leadership positions to better support workflow processes and improve service delivery for clients.
- A budget lift in 2023/24 enabled the WAO to hire more staff, increasing its capacity to support vulnerable workers across BC.
- Reinvigorated the WAO's outreach efforts, including developing a new, accessible process for workers' organizations to request training.
- Provided improved Employers' Advisers Office (EAO) educational materials to reflect ongoing legislative, regulatory and policy changes within the workers' compensation system.
- Redesigned the EAO's email distribution system and began moving towards implementing a new digital distribution platform.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The WAO continued to transform its Case Management System (CMS) and public interface. The new CMS applies human-centred design to create a system that increases accessibility and simplifies both communications and workflow processes within a complicated appeals system. In addition, the WAO re-initiated its quarterly Client Satisfaction Survey to obtain feedback directly from clients about how the WAO can improve the client service experience. Latest results indicate an 84.54% satisfaction rate.

With respect to outreach efforts, the WAO planned for upcoming consultation clinics as well as virtual and in-person training for unions and other organizations that support workers. The WAO's Outreach Committee also developed a new process for taking requests for training, which is now available on the WAO's website.

Updates to the EAO's educational materials ensured that employers and workers received timely and accurate information to increase their understanding and compliance, thereby promoting safe, healthy and respectful workplaces. The EAO's new digital distribution platform further supports this goal by allowing greater functionality and accessibility to the distribution of its quarterly Newsletters and Law & Policy Bulletins to employers of B.C.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
2.1a Number of community outreach sessions conducted annually by the Workers' Advisers Office ¹	10	18	Maintain or improve over baseline	7
2.1b Number of educational outreach sessions conducted annually by the Employers' Advisers Office ²	100	147	175	328

Data source: Ministry of Labour, Workers' Advisers Office and Employers' Advisers Office internal data.

¹PMs 2.1a and 2.1b targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as "Maintain or improve over baseline". For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 - 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

This performance measure tracks the number of outreach sessions that the WAO and EAO hold each fiscal year to foster awareness among workers and employers of their rights and responsibilities under the *Workers Compensation Act*. The WAO facilitated 7 community outreach sessions in 2023/24. The reduction in sessions, compared to the baseline target, reflects a temporary pause in targeted outreach sessions while the WAO focused on filling staff vacancies and responding to an increase in demand for WAO services. The EAO also held 328 community outreach sessions throughout the province in 2023/24, which reflects an ongoing increase in the number of sessions previously reduced during the pandemic.

Objective 2.2: Maintain an effective B.C. temporary foreign worker protection regime.

Key results

- Maintained and enforced the recruiter licensing system with 488 active licensed foreign worker recruiters licensed in 2023.
- Maintained and enforced the employer registration system with 24,050 active registered temporary foreign worker employers.
- Accurate and reliable information was easily accessible through the public-facing website on the temporary foreign worker regime.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

Administered by the Employment Standards Branch, the *Temporary Foreign Worker Protection Act* (TFWPA) protects vulnerable temporary foreign workers from harmful hiring practices and provides for enforcement of legislative requirements. The Employment Standards Branch actively supported the application process, which requires recruiters of temporary foreign workers to submit applications to be licensed, and employers of certain temporary foreign workers to be registered.

Education and outreach was provided directly to migrant workers, associations and consulates to ensure that workers, employers and recruiters understand the rights and obligations of all parties under the legislation. The recruiter licensing and employer registration systems under the TFWPA were actively updated, including the publishing of active licensed recruiters and registered employers on a public-facing website.

The Ministry continued to receive a high volume of registrations in the reporting period, as many employers have recently turned to hiring temporary foreign workers in response to labour shortages. The Employment Standards Branch has been working with the Federal Government to better coordinate service delivery to meet this increased demand.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2022/2023 Target	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
2.2 Number of proactive investigations undertaken under the Temporary Foreign Worker Protection Program	20	20	Maintain or Improve	36

Data source: Ministry of Labour, Employment Standards Branch internal data.

¹PM 2.2 targets for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as "Maintain or improve." For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 - 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

The Employment Standards Branch Compliance team contributes to the Branch mandate to investigate and resolve wage complaints, and in addition, assessing and issuing all licenses, registrations, variances and permits, and carrying out its Agricultural Compliance (Farm Labour) proactive responsibilities.

Proactive investigations of employers and recruitment agencies can be a key feature of ensuring that the TFWPA is effective in protecting vulnerable foreign workers. The Branch completed 36 proactive investigations within the foreign worker regime this fiscal year, with a focus on education and ensuring compliance with the TFWPA's recruiter licensing and employer registration requirements.

The Employment Standards Branch's Compliance Team's primary focus is resolving wage complaints, assessing and issuing licences, registrations, variances and permits, and carrying out its Agricultural Compliance (Farm Labour) proactive responsibilities.

Goal 3: Support forest workers as government transitions towards a new approach for sustainable forest management

Objective 3.1: Support forest workers impacted by old growth harvesting deferrals through the Bridging to Retirement program.

Key results

- Continued administration of the Bridging to Retirement Program (Program) to support transitioning older workers to retirement and preserving jobs for younger workers in the forestry sector.
- Continued participation in the administration of the Forestry Worker and Community Supports programs which support communities and workers impacted in the forestry sector, minimizing operational mill impacts of old growth deferrals and preserving well-paying jobs for forestry workers in their communities.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

In 2023/24, the Program approved funding benefits for 473 forestry workers who were 55 years and older. There are three streams within the Bridging to Retirement Program that supports workers to bridge to older workers voluntarily wishing to retire from a working operation to create a vacancy for a younger worker.

The number of applications funded is a direct measure of the number of people who benefited from the bridging benefit.

Performance measures

Performance Measures	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
3.1a Number of workers receiving bridging benefit funding offers	364	400	473
3.1b Number of forestry jobs opened for impacted workers	329	N/A	300

Data source: Ministry of Labour, Bridging to Retirement Program internal data.

¹PM 3.1a targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as 200 and N/A, respectively. PM 3.1b targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as TBD and N/A, respectively. Targets are based on estimates of potential impacts for the industry. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 - 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

The communities with the largest number of workers who received funding were Prince George (\$3.6 million), Port Alberni (\$3.4 million), Powell River (\$2.3 million), Houston (\$2.2 million) and Duncan (\$2 million).

2023/24 saw an increase of workers accepting Program benefits by approximately 9 per cent. The increase in worker applications was partly due to the policy shift in the eligibility criteria for access to the benefits. The change in eligibility criteria was in response to input from forestry workers, labour organizations and local governments. The policy change allowed workers to accept Program funding and continue to be an employee (outside of the forestry sector).

The Program continued its collaboration with the ministries of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills, and Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation, to identify training opportunities and funding for junior workers to support older skilled workers retire from impacted mills.

Financial Report

Financial Summary

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations ¹ (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
Operating Expenses					
Labour Programs	19,618	24,030	43,648	43,690	42
Executive and Support Services	1,871	152	2,023	1,981	-42
Sub-total	21,489	24,182	45,671	45,671	0
Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual ²	0	0	0	-1	-1
Total	21,489	24,182	45,671	45,670	-1
Ministry Capital Expenditures					
Labour Program	3	0	3	1	-2
Total	3	0	3	1	-2

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 \$0.001 million is a reversal of accruals in the previous year.

Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of August 9, 2024, the Minister of Labour is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

[WorkSafeBC](#)

WorkSafeBC is an agency established under the *Workers Compensation Act* with the mandate to oversee a no-fault insurance system for workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities. WorkSafeBC partners with employers and workers in B.C. to: promote the prevention of workplace injury and illness; rehabilitate those who are injured, and provide timely return to work; provide fair compensation to replace workers' loss of wages while recovering from injuries; and ensure sound financial management for a viable workers' compensation system.

[The Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal](#)

The Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal is the final level of appeal in the workers' compensation system of B.C. and is independent of WorkSafeBC. The Tribunal is established under the *Workers Compensation Act*.

[The Labour Relations Board](#)

The Labour Relations Board is an independent, administrative tribunal established under the *Labour Relations Code* with the mandate to mediate and adjudicate employment and labour relations matters related to unionization and unionized workplaces.

[The Employment Standards Tribunal](#)

The B.C. Employment Standards Tribunal is an administrative tribunal established under the *Employment Standards Act*. The Tribunal conducts appeals of determinations issued by the Director of Employment Standards under the *Employment Standards Act* and under the *Temporary Foreign Worker Protection Act*.

Appendix B: Progress on Mandate Letter Priorities

The following is a summary of progress made on priorities as stated in Minister Harry Bains's [2022 Mandate Letter](#).

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2024
<p>Work to improve the timeliness of employment standards dispute resolution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget 2023 provided an increase of almost \$12 M over three years to support the Employment Standards Branch's (ESB) sustainable complaints management strategy. • The funding supports an increase to ESB's capacity, including hiring up to 33 more full-time staff in response to the growing demand for ESB's services. • ESB recruited and onboarded new permanent and temporary staff in all roles that support complaints processing.
<p>Continue engaging with affected parties on implementation of the recommendations of the Industrial Inquiry Commission regarding Forest Industry Successorship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry continued to engage in policy development and discussions with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and the Ministry of Forests regarding forestry successorship and the labour impacts of tenure take-backs. Government is not contemplating amending the Code to implement the Industrial Inquiry Commission's July 2022 recommendations regarding successorship in the forestry sector at this time.
<p>Work with WorkSafeBC to ensure meaningful programs are in place to support the return of injured workers to their workplaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022, amendments to the Workers Compensation Act added new legal duties for employers to maintain employment for injured workers, and for the worker and employer to cooperate in an injured worker's return to work. • The amendments came into force on January 1, 2024. WorkSafeBC undertook policy and program development work to support the successful implementation of these duties.

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2024
<p>Support WorkSafeBC, with involvement of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, to develop better options for chronic work-related pain, including improving pain management practices for injured workers and providing treatment on demand to those with chronic pain as a result of workplace injuries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WorkSafeBC has engaged stakeholders consistently in the review process to inform policy development and consulted on proposed policy changes throughout 2023 and 2024.
<p>Ensure our labour law is keeping up with modern workplaces through the upcoming review of the Labour Code, providing stable labour relations and supporting the exercise of collective bargaining rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As recommended by the Labour Relations Code Review Panel in 2018, the Minister must, every five years, appoint a committee of special advisors to review the Labour Relations Code (Code) and make recommendations. • This ensures there are regular and transparent reviews of the Code that include public consultation. • In February 2024, the Minister appointed a panel to review the Code, consult with interest groups and Indigenous parties across B.C., and report back to the Minister with recommendations by June 30, 2024.