Ministry of Attorney General

2025/26 - 2027/28 Service Plan

March 2025



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Published by the Ministry of Attorney General

Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Attorney General 2025/26 – 2027/28 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.

Honourable Niki Sharma, K.C. Attorney General and Deputy Premier February 14, 2025

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Strategic Direction

In 2025/26, the Government of British Columbia will continue to prioritize delivering the services and infrastructure needed for people to build good lives in strong communities.

To support this objective, Government will focus on growing the economy, responding to the threat of tariffs, creating good paying jobs, improving affordability, strengthening health care and education, and making communities safer.

Government will also continue deepening relationships with Indigenous Peoples while advancing implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan.

This 2025/26 service plan outlines how the Ministry of Attorney General will support the government's priorities and selected action items identified in the Minister's January 2025 Mandate Letter.

Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Attorney General and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General work together as the justice and public safety sector to advance a shared vision of a safe, secure, just, and resilient British Columbia. The ministry works to keep communities safe and provide certainty, proportionality and, above all, fairness when dealing with criminal, civil, and family law matters, while protecting people, especially those who are most vulnerable. The ministry, while dealing with these matters, is focused on promoting confidence in the integrity of the sector and ensuring continued public participation and support.

The ministry is responsible for sheriff and court administration services, legal aid, prosecution services, administrative tribunals, civil and family justice services, protection and promotion of human rights, providing legal advice to Government, and developing justice policy and justice reforms.

The ministry is also responsible for promoting multiculturalism and leading anti-racism initiatives through the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives.

The Indigenous Justice Secretariat, housed in the Ministry of Attorney General, is a unique commitment between the Province and the BC First Nations Justice Council to cement their relationship and commitment to decreasing the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the criminal justice system along two tracks of change: (1) Reform of the existing justice system; (2) Transformation through the rebuilding of Indigenous justice systems. The Indigenous Justice Secretariat was designed and implemented to build capacity toward an Indigenous-based justice system.

Performance Planning

Goal 1: The justice sector is fair and accessible

A foundational underpinning of British Columbia's justice system is to be fair, navigable, and accessible for all.

Objective 1.1: Enhance the user experience and modernize the justice system

In ensuring the justice system is fair and accessible, the ministry will continually look to improve the experience of British Columbians interfacing with the justice system through service-design and offerings that are a part of the delivery of justice.

Key Strategies

- Advance the Courthouse Capital Asset Management Plan, including courthouse replacement and renovations, infrastructure remediation, WiFi expansion and facility enhancements across the province.
- In alignment with the <u>Court Digital Transformation Strategy</u>, modernize the justice system for British Columbians, leveraging technology and user-centred design to assist users in navigating legal matters.
- Continue to improve early resolution services offered to families remotely and in-person at Family Justice Centres and Justice Access Centres. This includes expansion of the early resolution process to the following Provincial Court family registries in 2025/26: Abbotsford, Chilliwack, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Pemberton, Richmond, Sechelt, and Vancouver (Robson Square).
- Support the 20 boards and tribunals accountable to the ministry with business operations, transformation, innovation, and modernization, including the Civil Resolution Tribunal, Mental Health Review Board, and BC Human Rights Tribunal, among others.
- Streamline the collection process for those who have obtained a court judgment or tribunal order for the payment of money, by continuing work to implement the Money Judgment Enforcement Act.

Objective 1.2: Increase access to justice

The ministry will continue to advance systemic regulatory and policy initiatives that serve to enhance the public's access to justice.

Key Strategies

• Continue the legal professions regulatory modernization project with a focus on implementation of the new *Legal Professions Act*, to create a single and modernized regulator for all legal service providers in the province, including lawyers, notaries public, and regulated paralegals.

- Further family justice reform initiatives, including support for those experiencing family
 and intimate partner violence, resolving disputes out of court, modernizing the Family Law
 Act, and promoting the Child Support Recalculation Service.
- Support the delivery of legal aid services for low-income British Columbians through Legal Aid BC.
- In partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development, implement the Rights Advice Service for patients who are involuntarily detained under the Mental Health Act.
- Work with First Nations to increase their access to justice, including the development of a
 cross-ministerial Assistant Deputy Minister advisory board that will establish a process
 and recommend initiatives for responding to First Nations' requests related to
 enforcement of laws, Indigenous Courts, and child welfare jurisdiction.
- Work to strengthen consumer protection in B.C.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2019/20 Baseline	2024/25 Forecast	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target
[1a] Percentage of respondents who agreed that the Parenting After Separation program gave them a better understanding of the family justice system, including it's relevant laws and services ¹	74%	92%	85%	85%	85%
[1b] Percentage of respondents who agreed that the program gave them a better understanding of alternatives to court ¹	75%	93%	85%	85%	85%
[1c] Percentage of respondents who agreed that the program gave them a better understanding of making decisions in the best interests of the children ¹	77%	92%	85%	85%	85%

Data source: <u>Parenting After Separation (English and Punjabi)</u> and <u>Parenting After Separation for Indigenous Families.</u>
Participant evaluation surveys, conducted by Family Justice Services Division, with results compiled by Business Research and Diagnostics Group, Ministry of Attorney General

Discussion

The Parenting After Separation Programs are free online courses for B.C. parents and other family members who are dealing with separation or divorce and facing decisions about guardianship, parenting arrangements, contact, child support, and spousal support. Most parents complete the course as an early step in a provincial court matter. The Programs assist

¹ All information is presented in aggregate form to ensure respondent anonymity pursuant to provincial and federal legislation and research ethical guidelines. All data for this survey was collected and managed under PIA PSSG19023 and is consistent with the Tri Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Research.

parents in making informed decisions around separation, ensuring decisions are in the best interests of their children, while improving access to justice for participants by providing them with information about the justice system and alternatives to court.

The online Parenting After Separation program was introduced in 2011 and revised in 2021. Online Parenting After Separation for Indigenous Families began in 2019, and online Parenting After Separation became available in Punjabi in 2023. As of January 4, 2022, the Provincial Court Family Rules require that parties to Family Law Matter applications complete a Parenting After Separation course before a family management conference with a judge can be scheduled. Parents who complete the online courses are invited to complete an anonymous online course evaluation form and results are compiled quarterly by the Business Research and Diagnostics Group of the Ministry of Attorney General.

This performance measure reflects how the Parenting After Separation Program facilitates user understanding of navigating the justice system. A target of 85 per cent agreement with these statements is a strong indicator that the program has been successful with a large majority of users. Targets reflect the expectation that there will be some fluctuation in results from year to year, but results should not fall below the stated levels.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2019/20	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	Baseline	Forecast	Target	Target	Target
[1d] Percentage of eFiled Court Documents ^{1,2,3}	35.7%	50.2%	51.7%	53.2%	54.7%

Data source: Strategic Information and Business Applications, Court Services Branch. Updated on January 8, 2025.

Discussion

The Court Services Branch and the three levels of Courts provide additional virtual mechanisms for users to interact with the Courts. This includes provisions for users to electronically file court documents through Court Services Online. The percentage of eFiled Court Documents metric reflects the proportion of documents that are eligible for electronic filing that are eFiled through Court Services Online.

This performance measure demonstrates clear progress in the ministry's focus on modernizing processes or court forms to enhance user experience when interfacing with the justice system. An uptake in the use of eFiling demonstrates that citizens are utilizing alternative means offered by the ministry for advancing their court proceedings. The development or modernization of SmartForms, guided pathways within online applications using plain language, authentication methods, and increased document upload capacity made the process easier for citizens to file electronically and continues to be a significant component in making court processes more accessible and navigable for British Columbians. The ministry recognizes, however, the role in-

¹ Data are preliminary and subject to change – small fluctuations in previously reported totals and percentages are expected due to continuing improvements in data quality.

² Documents in scope are those that are eligible for electronic filing (eFile) through Court Services Online.

³This dataset excludes Supreme Motor Vehicle and Provincial Family documents. Supreme Court Motor Vehicle documents filed are expected to decline after the implementation of ICBC Enhanced Care Coverage. Provincial Family documents will be included once the user base for Provincial Family eFiling expands.

person filing will continue to play for some British Columbians, for those with different abilities, no access to technology, or the desire to access in-person services.

The forecast for 2024/25 indicates a 4 per cent increase over the previous fiscal year with an expected rate of about 50 per cent of eligible documents eFiled.

Goal 2: British Columbian communities are protected and resilient

The justice sector plays a critical role in initiatives that help protect all British Columbians, including communities, vulnerable sectors, families, and racialized groups.

Objective 2.1: Improved community and public safety for all British Columbians

The ministry will contribute to a multi-faceted and cross-sectoral approach to protecting communities and individuals throughout the province. This will include addressing concerns about repeat violent offending, advancing legislation that protects vulnerable British Columbians, and implementing safe supports for family justice.

Key Strategies

- Dedicated BC Prosecution Service prosecutors and professional staff will continue to participate in the Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative.
- The BC Prosecution Service will continue to apply its updated policy on hate crimes that target all identifiable groups, including those subjected to hate because of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or Indigeneity.
- Operate and evaluate federally funded pilot programs to support those experiencing intimate partner violence as they navigate the family justice system.
- Provide support for the Province's gender-based violence action plan.

Objective 2.2: Address systemic racism and support Indigenous and other racialized communities to respond to public incidents of racism and hate.

Advancing equity and social justice is the cornerstone of new strategies to combat racism, reduce systemic barriers, and build understanding and respect for one another across British Columbia's diverse society.

Key Strategies

- Implement the Anti-Racism Act to better serve everyone in British Columbia and address systemic racism in government programs and services.
- Work across ministries to respond to data trends identified through the Anti-Racism Data Act via implementation of the Anti-Racism Act.

- Engage communities through the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network, multiculturalism grants, and related initiatives, to provide them with the information, supports, and training needed to respond to and prevent future incidents of racism.
- Support victims of hate incidents in B.C. by operating the Racist Incident Helpline to report, track and provide resources to individuals harmed by racist incidents.
- Continue to address historical wrongs with Sons of Freedom Doukhobor community and ongoing work with the National Association of Japanese Canadians.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2017/18	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	Baseline	Forecast	Target	Target	Target
[2a] Number of B.C. communities engaged in projects that build intercultural trust and understanding, and reduce racism and systemic barriers ^{1,2}	45	45	50	50	50

Data source: Internally compiled data from the BC Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Grants Program, and the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network.

Discussion

This performance measure reflects provincial support towards collaborative initiatives led by communities affected by racism. Community-led engagements build intercultural trust and understanding, combat racism, and promote diversity and inclusion in B.C. This is a core component of supporting Indigenous and racialized communities throughout B.C.

Goal 3: The justice sector is safe and responsive to Indigenous Peoples

The justice sector will continue to contribute to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples through partnerships, facilitating restoration of traditional justice systems, and taking a more collaborative approach to litigation with Indigenous groups.

Objective 3.1: Facilitate self-determination and restoration of traditional Indigenous justice systems in partnership with Indigenous leadership and communities

Government has made commitments to reconciliation through the Declaration Act Action Plan and annual reporting processes. The ministry's actions in that plan aim to make the justice system safer and more responsive to Indigenous Peoples. This includes advancing the BC First Nations Justice Strategy which aims to reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the justice system and restore and revitalize First Nations legal institutions. Further, advancing the Métis Justice Strategy will make the justice system safer and more culturally relevant for Métis people in B.C.

Key Strategies

- In partnership with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, the Federal Government, and Indigenous communities, continue work with the BC First Nations Justice Council to advance the B.C. First Nations Justice Strategy.
- In partnership with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, work with the Métis Nation BC to develop a detailed implementation plan to advance the Métis Justice Strategy.
- Deliver culturally appropriate justice services, with holistic wrap-around supports, for Indigenous people, through the network of 15 physical Indigenous Justice Centres and the virtual centre, with preliminary evaluation, service enhancements, and increased integration with other justice service providers.
- Reduce Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system through ongoing
 policy review and changes, justice sector employee education, expansion of Indigenous
 courts (additional dates at existing locations), and outreach and partnerships with
 Indigenous communities.
- In consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, continue reviewing and ensuring alignment of B.C. laws with UNDRIP for all statutes within the ministry's mandate including new and amending bills.
- Support the interface between Indigenous laws and legal institutions and B.C.'s laws and legal institutions. Work collaboratively with Nations to assist them in the enforcement of their laws in multiple areas, including child welfare, offences, education, and debts.

Objective 3.2: Advance reconciliation through use of the Directives on Civil Litigation involving Indigenous Peoples

While Indigenous claims can be pursued through litigation, negotiation is a preferrable way of reconciling the complex and competing interests at stake. The core objectives are to prioritize and promote resolution, innovation, and negotiated settlement, in efforts to reduce the potential for litigation.

Key Strategies

- Continue to work with Indigenous Peoples on implementation of the Directives.
- Review active litigation to ensure the Directives are being implemented as intended, which may include making pleadings amendments.
- Work with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation on identifying potential avenues for negotiation of the dispute, such as forms of alternative dispute resolution.
- Seek early internal government meetings to discuss the possible effects of litigation on the work of reconciliation and try to identify collaborative ways to resolve all or part of the potential or newly filed legal proceedings.

 When litigation has concluded, meet with clients to discuss preventing similar litigation in the future; as well as debriefing with counsel for the Indigenous parties to identify potential areas for improvement.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2020/21 Baseline	2024/25 Forecast	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target
[3a] Number of cases from Indigenous Clients supported at Indigenous Justice Centres	254	907	1340	1500	1500
[3b] Number of Indigenous Clients served by Indigenous Justice Centres.	N/A	770	1140	1275	1275

Data source: BC First Nations Justice Council

Discussion

The objective of improved outcomes for Indigenous Peoples in their interactions with the justice system will be met through more Indigenous clients receiving high quality legal and other services in a culturally safe and relevant way.

The targets in these performance measures were developed based on the current Indigenous Justice Centre caseloads and the planned opening of the latest six additional IJCs in late 2024/25. The BC First Nations Justice Council directly provides this data as the service provider.

The target measures are based on assumptions of usage at IJCs that are not yet open. These figures use assumptions on the forecasted staffing complement, opening dates, and community usage of services. The increase to target amounts for these measures is based on the expansion of the network of IJCs to 15 physical IJCs, as well as a virtual IJC, by end of 2024/25, and the assumption of 2025/26 having a full year of operating.

¹2024/25 forecast based on year-to-date BCFNJC client and case volume as of December 31, 2024.

²Future years forecast based on year-to-date BCFNJC client and case volume as of December 31, 2024, extrapolated to additional centres.

Financial Summary

(\$000s)	2024/25 Restated Estimates ¹	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Plan	2027/28 Plan
Operating Expenses				
Justice Services	197,700	206,454	208,025	208,029
Indigenous Justice Secretariat	22,363	20,333	20,333	20,333
Prosecution Services	212,499	214,826	215,621	215,621
Court Services	156,067	161,211	161,276	161,276
Legal Services	40,682	43,284	43,284	43,284
Agencies, Boards, Commissions & Other Tribunals	52,506	55,099	55,099	55,099
Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism	6,804	6,628	6,628	6,628
Executive and Support Services	40,896	42,419	42,419	42,419
Judiciary	110,671	112,638	112,785	112,785
Crown Proceeding Act	24,500	24,500	24,500	24,500
Independent Investigations Office	12,428	12,652	12,652	12,652
Public Guardian and Trustee	0	0	0	0
Total	877,116	900,044	902,622	902,626
Capital Expenditures				
Agencies, Boards, Commissions & Other Tribunals	10	0	0	0
Executive and Support Services	8,925	8,758	6,460	6,460
Judiciary	819	770	770	770
Public Guardian and Trustee Operating Account	363	363	363	363
Total	10,117	9,891	7,593	7,593

¹ For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2024/25 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the *2025/26 Estimates*.

^{*} Further information on program funding and vote recoveries is available in the <u>Estimates and Supplement to the Estimates</u>.

Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of February 14, 2025 the Attorney General is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

- Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC
- Association of BC Forest Professionals
- British Columbia Ferry Commission
- BC Family Maintenance Agency
- BC Human Rights Tribunal
- British Columbia Institute of Agrologists
- British Columbia Review Board
- British Columbia Utilities Commission
- Building Code Appeal Board
- Civil Resolution Tribunal
- College of Applied Biology
- Community Care and Assisted Living Appeal Board
- Employment Standards Tribunal
- Energy Resource Appeal Tribunal
- Engineers and Geoscientists BC
- Environmental Appeal Board
- Financial Services Tribunal
- Forest Appeals Commission
- Health Professions Review Board
- Hospital Appeal Board
- Independent Investigations Office of BC
- Investigation and Standards Office
- Judicial Council of the Provincial Court of BC
- Labour Relations Board
- Legal Aid BC
- Mental Health Review Board

- Notaries Public Board of Examiners
- Property Assessment Appeal Board
- Passenger Transportation Board
- Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia
- <u>Safety Standards Appeal Board</u>
- <u>Skilled Trades BC Appeal Board</u>
- Surface Rights Board
- Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal

Appendix B: Minister Mandate Letter



January 16, 2025

Honourable Niki Sharma Attorney General and Deputy Premier Parliament Buildings Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Attorney General Sharma:

Congratulations on your appointment as Attorney General and Deputy Premier 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 Attorney General programs and initiatives to ensure programs remain relevant, are efficient, and speed up court and tribunal processes including judgment enforcement. This is important in the context of current Provincial budget constraints and overall efficiency.
- Ensure strong and safe communities for everyone across the province by aggressively pushing the federal government for continuing legal reform and cooperation with the province that will ensure violent and prolific offenders remain in custody after arrest.
- Use effective engagement with key stakeholders and aggressive innovation in relation to technology, rules, and citizen-oriented processes to improve access to justice and reduce costs, increase speed, and deliver independent and impartial justice and dispute resolution.
- Work with Indigenous communities and leadership consistent with the *BC First Nations Justice Strategy* and *Métis Justice Strategy* to reduce Indigenous overrepresentation in the justice system and promote safety and security in Indigenous communities across the province.
- Support the work of the Declaration Act Secretariat to align BC laws with the rights of Indigenous peoples.

- Protect British Columbians from unfair healthcare costs and ensure accountability for wrongdoers by identifying opportunities to recover expenses.
- Work with the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General to ensure safe access for British Columbians of all religious backgrounds to their places of worship.
- Work with the Cabinet Committee on Community Safety to ensure that initiatives identified by the committee are prioritized and delivered by your ministry as required.
- With support from the Parliamentary Secretary on Gender Equity, continue work to
 ensure that the justice system is responsive to the needs of survivors of genderbased violence.
- With support from your Parliamentary Secretary, lead work on anti-racism initiatives.
- Work with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to fight the rise in discrimination and related hate crimes.
- Continue work to strengthen consumer protection in BC.

To assist you in meeting the commitments we have made to British Columbians, you are assigned a Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives whose focus will be to:

- Work with you to ensure British Columbians have effective tools to fight all types of racism, discrimination, and hate crimes through civil and criminal laws and processes.
- Work across ministries to ensure we are responsive to the issues identified through the *Anti Racism Data Act* efforts established under the last government and support the Minister to implement the *Anti-Racism Act*.

You will work closely together and ensure your Parliamentary Secretary receives appropriate support to deliver on this work.

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,

David Eby, KC

Premier

cc: Jessie Sunner, MLA

Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives