

# Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

## 2025/26 – 2027/28 Service Plan

March 2025



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## Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'SM', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Honourable Sheila Malcolmson  
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
February 12, 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 Social Development and Poverty Reduction](#) 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 Social Development and Poverty Reduction](#) (SDPR) focuses on reducing poverty, creating opportunities and increasing inclusion. The purpose of the ministry is to provide quality services for British Columbians in need, to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in their community and to reach their full potential.

SDPR is guided by five pieces of legislation: the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#), the [Employment and Assistance Act](#), the [Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act](#), the [Poverty Reduction Strategy Act](#) and the [Community Living Authority Act](#). The Minister is responsible for [Community Living BC](#) (CLBC) and is supported by the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits and the Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility. The ministry's key priorities include:

- Continue to develop tools and approaches to prevent poverty and increase income, focusing first on youth growing up in families living in poverty.
- Work with the [Ministers of Health, Finance, Citizens' Services](#) and others to ensure low- and moderate-income British Columbians receive and retain the federal and provincial benefits they are eligible for, beginning with the Canada Disability Benefit.
- Lead government's work on accessibility initiatives.
- Support British Columbians struggling with the cost of food and unable to afford the basics by leading work on food security and finding opportunities to support BC farmers and food producers in this work.
- Work with the Cabinet Committee on Community Safety to ensure that initiatives identified by the committee are prioritized and delivered as required.
- Lead work, with support from the [Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills](#), to deliver skills and training initiatives for people facing multiple complex barriers that will enable them to access opportunities and build a dignified life.

- Work with stakeholders, particularly people with lived experience, to support the development and implementation of government's work to make B.C. more accessible and inclusive for all people.
- Continue to strengthen government's relationship with the non-profit sector and support the effectiveness of non-profit sector organizations, including through the [Social Services Sector Roundtable](#).
- Work with the [Minister of Finance](#) to review all existing ministry programs and initiatives to ensure our programs remain relevant, are efficient, ensure safe and strong communities, and reduce poverty.

Further to the above, two key priorities for the ministry which support the mandate letters are:

- Leading collaborative engagement through the [Social Services Sector Roundtable](#) to help strengthen the important community social services that people count on every day; and
- Through [Community Living BC](#), continue working on the [Re-imagining Community Inclusion Initiative](#) and the [Re-imagining Community Inclusion Work Plan](#) to improve services for adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

## Operating Environment

The ministry provides income and disability assistance to an average of 254,000 people each month throughout the year, including 53,000 dependent children. Approximately 151,000 of these individuals are in receipt of disability assistance. The number of people receiving assistance has been increasing because of a slow growth in employment and continued growth in refugee claimants. The refugee claimant caseload started to rise in 2022 and has increased from 1,985 in 2022 to 5,983 in 2024, and now account for 8.7% of the income assistance caseload (up from 3.4% in 2022). This component of the caseload is growing at an increasing rate and this trend is expected to continue through at least 2025.

Slow growth in the labour market, a rapidly growing population and high inflation starting in 2022 have put pressure on poverty rates throughout Canada. The number of British Columbians living in poverty in 2022 increased by 150,000 to 597,000 according to the Market Basket Measure (MBM). This includes 97,000 children living in low-income families, an increase of 27,000 over 2021, and 89,000 seniors. British Columbia still met the target to reduce the total poverty rate by 25% by 2024 but is no longer meeting the target to reduce child poverty by 50%.

The ministry provides employment services through [WorkBC](#) to a growing number of people each year, which is expected to reach 101,000 people. The demand for employment services is primarily driven by an increase in the numbers of immigrants seeking services. The ministry remains committed to ensuring employment services remain relevant, efficient, and reduce poverty, especially for those facing more complex barriers to employment.

# Performance Planning

## Goal 1: Reduce Poverty in British Columbia

The ministry is responsible for the [Poverty Reduction Strategy Act](#), which sets out legislated targets and actions to reduce poverty in British Columbia.

### Objective 1.1: Implement the cross-government, province-wide Poverty-Reduction Strategy.

As the lead on British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy, which was updated in July 2024, the ministry must work across government to ensure that the requirements and targets as set out in the [Poverty Reduction Strategy Act](#) are achieved.

#### Key Strategies

- Continue to implement B.C.'s updated Poverty Reduction Strategy to achieve legislated targets and address other pressing issues such as the depth of poverty and the cycle of poverty.
- Develop tools and approaches to prevent poverty and increase income, focusing first on youth growing up in families living in poverty.
- Work with other ministries to ensure low- and moderate-income British Columbians receive and retain the federal and provincial benefits they are eligible for, beginning with the Canada Disability Benefit.
- Lead work on food security to support British Columbians struggling with the cost of food and unable to afford the basics in partnership with other ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and external partners.
- Lead work to deliver skills and training initiatives for people facing multiple complex barriers to improve community and labour market participation.

#### Performance Measures

Performance Measure[s]	2021 Actuals	2022 Actuals	2023-24 Target	2034 Target
[1a] Change in Total Poverty Rate from 2016 <sup>1</sup>	-45.0%	-27.5%	-25.0%	-60.0%
[1b] Change in Child Poverty Rate from 2016	-54.6%	-36.8%	-50.0%	-75.0%
[1c] Change in Seniors Poverty Rate from 2016	-23.1%	-4.4%	N/A	-50.0%

Data source: Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0135-01 Low-income statistics by age, sex and economic family type.

<sup>1</sup> As a result of a delay in the reporting of poverty statistics and the time it takes for investments to impact poverty rates, there are no interim targets.

The two-year delay in producing the poverty statistics means 2023 MBM data will be released in 2025.

All targets use 2016 as the base year.

## Discussion

The 2018 Poverty Reduction Strategy Act (PRSA) set out legislated targets for the reduction of both the overall poverty rate (25%) and the poverty rate for children (50%) by 2024 (using a 2016 baseline, the most recent numbers available at the time). The targets were set to be ambitious, achievable, and significantly improve the lives of low-income British Columbians.

In March 2024, B.C. updated the PRSA to include new 10-year targets to reduce the overall poverty rate by 60%, the child poverty rate by 75% and a new measure to reduce the seniors' poverty rate by 50% (from 2016 levels). These targets recognize that while progress has been made to reduce poverty, we need to continue to build on it. The new poverty reduction target for seniors recognizes that seniors have been hit especially hard the last few years with rising costs of living.

The Province uses Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure (MBM)<sup>1</sup> as its official poverty measure.

## Goal 2: British Columbians in need have services, supports and opportunities that make life better.

The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction focuses on providing a system of supports to British Columbians in need, to help them achieve their social and economic independence and secure a better future.

### Objective 2.1: Deliver reliable, responsive, consistent, accessible and secure income and disability assistance services.

Delivering modern and consistent service with a focus on reliability, responsiveness and relationship-building remains a key priority. The ministry continues to expand and improve online self-service options, which increases accessibility of services for clients regardless of their location in British Columbia.

### Key Strategies

- Maintain community presence through outreach by Community Integration Specialists, working collaboratively with community partners, and expanding the use of mobile service delivery options.
- Continue to promote and improve service options that support accessibility for clients during climate events such as wildfires and floods, including Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) payments, digital self-service, and telephone reporting options.
- Regularly monitor client feedback and satisfaction to help improve services.
- Ensure administrative fairness through the provision of an effective and efficient reconsideration and appeal system.

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<sup>1</sup> [Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/26-669-x/2019001/article/00001-eng.htm)



## Discussion

The ministry's income and disability assistance services aim to help people establish ties with their communities and the job market. These services help people secure their future, achieve self-sufficiency to support their families, and contribute to their communities. By offering temporary assistance to those who can work (and long-term support to those who face challenges working due to disabilities or other barriers), the ministry ensures the needs of British Columbians are met.

The ministry continually adapts its service delivery to enhance accessibility and cater to the diverse needs of clients. People can access in-person services at 84 locations, including 36 ministry offices and 48 Service BC offices across the province. Telephone-based services provide clients with automated reporting options and direct live support from ministry workers. For those who prefer self-service options, the ministry is continually improving the [My Self-Serve](#) portal and the self serve options available through the toll-free number. Additionally, the Electronic Fund Transfer payment option ensures clients receive the support they need during extreme weather events and wildfires.

Community Integration Services offer in-person outreach and in-reach services to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, connecting them with financial assistance and community supports. This includes partnerships with community organizations, such as Friendship Centers throughout the province, to provide support outside traditional government office settings. The ministry is also expanding the number of vehicles equipped with technology to deliver mobile services.

## **Objective 2.2: Job seekers have access to high quality services and supports they need to find and keep meaningful employment**

High quality employment services and supports are needed so B.C. is ready to meet the future demands of a skilled workforce and fill millions<sup>2</sup> of jobs over the next decade. These services help underrepresented people participate in the labour market, including Indigenous people, women, people of colour, and people with disabilities.

### Key Strategies

- Work with our service delivery partners to provide a high-quality, responsive, and consistent service experience to the people and communities in B.C.
- Deliver employment services and skills training initiatives that enable vulnerable people to access opportunities and build a brighter future. .
- Adapt programs and services to respond to the changing labour market environment and in anticipation of future labour market needs.
- Collaborate with community-led organizations and employers to create equitable employment opportunities for people.

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<sup>2</sup> British Columbia Labour Market Outlook 2021-2031 Forecast

## Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023/24 Baseline	2024/25 Forecast	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target
[2a] Percent of clients using <a href="#">My Self-Serve</a>	54%	59%	60%	62%	62%
[2b] Percent of clients receiving payments via Electronic Fund Transfer	85%	87%	87%	87%	87%
[2c] Percent of callers that reported the ministry worker was respectful (via a voluntary phone survey)	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%

Data source: Client Phone Survey collected by the Service Delivery Division, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

### Discussion

The ministry encourages the use of [My Self Serve](#)<sup>3</sup> as a convenient online option for British Columbians to access income and disability assistance. Ongoing promotion of this option is expected to maintain consistent client usage. The ministry collects feedback via survey from people who access services by telephone. This performance measure supports the monitoring and assessment of whether the ministry's staff training approach continues to result in clients reporting high levels of respectful treatment.

Performance Measure	2023/24 Baseline	2024/25 Forecast	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target
[2d] <a href="#">WorkBC</a> Client Satisfaction Score <sup>1</sup>	72	72	74	75	76

Data source: Employment and Labour Market Services Division, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, WorkBC Employment Services Client Intake Survey, In-Progress Survey and Exit Survey.

<sup>1</sup> WorkBC Client Satisfaction Score represents the overall client satisfaction with WorkBC services. Scores range from 0 to 100, with higher scores being considered better. The score represents the number of clients responding "satisfied" or "very satisfied" out of all survey respondents.

## Goal 3: Individuals with disabilities live, work and participate in their communities on an equal basis with all British Columbians

Individuals with disabilities account for the majority of people served by the ministry and are a growing proportion of the total population. The ministry will continue to support people with disabilities by reducing barriers and promoting equal participation in the economy and society.

<sup>3</sup> My Self Serve (MySS) provides online access to income and disability assistance for residents of British Columbia.

### **Objective 3.1: Support a comprehensive and integrated system of supports and services for individuals with disabilities**

Our communities are stronger when they include everyone. Removing the barriers that People with Disabilities currently experience ensures they are able to participate fully in their communities. Working in the spirit of “Nothing About Us Without Us” the ministry will continue to advance programs and policies that support Persons with Disabilities in British Columbia to meaningfully participate in their communities.

#### **Key Strategies**

- Provide adults with disabilities access to responsive services that support them in participating as full citizens and in achieving improved outcomes.
- Continue to work with persons with disabilities and their families, community stakeholders, public organizations, and the business community to develop solutions and strategies that improve the lives of persons with disabilities and identify barriers and solutions to improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities.
- Support the [Re-Imagining Community Inclusion \(RCI\)](#) Steering Committee to implement the [work plan](#) in response to the [10-Year Re-imagining Community Inclusion](#) Roadmap, to help improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities.
- Continue to support the transition process for youth with support needs when entering adulthood, to ensure they can access the ministry’s disability assistance program and the adult community living services offered through [Community Living BC](#).
- Support the continued implementation of the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) with the goal to address barriers that hinder the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities, including through the development of new accessibility standards for B.C.

#### **Discussion**

The ministry works across government and with external partners to improve the lives of Persons with Disabilities. The [Accessibility Directorate's](#) ongoing work to reduce barriers will further improve inclusion and employment opportunities. The priorities of the Accessibility Directorate are to create a culture of accessibility and inclusion, increase access to information and improve communications, improve accessibility of government buildings and transportation systems, increase employment in the B.C. public service, and improve the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.

Guided by the principle of “Nothing About Us, Without Us,” the ministry continues to work with persons with disabilities and the broader community to improve the social and economic outcomes of persons with disabilities. For example, the ministry works with its [Provincial Accessibility Committee](#) and two [Technical Committees](#) to develop standards in the areas of

accessible service delivery and employment accessibility. These accessibility standards will remove and prevent barriers that restrict persons with disabilities from equally participating in their community. The Presidents Group, a network of prominent business leaders, provides advice on best practices to make workplaces more accessible and inclusive and to improve employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

### Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023/24 Baseline	2024/25 Forecast	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target
[3a] Total amount of earnings exemptions reported by Persons with Disabilities	\$180 million	\$185 million	\$210 million	\$225 million	\$235 million

Data source: Research, Innovation and Policy Division, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

### Discussion

Employment rates for Persons with Disabilities in 2024 was lower than anticipated which impacted the amount of earnings exempted. Since COVID, the percentage of Persons with Disabilities reporting income has dropped significantly. While the rate is starting to rise, it remains far below pre-COVID levels despite an increase in earnings exemptions in 2024 and ministry efforts to increase employment rates. This indicates that the impact of earnings exemptions is taking longer to increase employment rates than expected.

## Financial Summary

(\$000s)	<b>2024/25 Restated Estimates<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>2025/26 Estimates</b>	<b>2026/27 Plan</b>	<b>2027/28 Plan</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>				
Income Assistance	3,502,169	3,892,899	4,066,820	4,248,328
Employment	30,897	31,126	31,126	31,126
Community Living Services	1,626,906	1,806,808	1,806,808	1,806,808
Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal	1,945	1,959	1,959	1,959
Executive and Support Services	14,055	14,324	14,324	14,324
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,175,972</b>	<b>5,747,116</b>	<b>5,921,037</b>	<b>6,102,545</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>				
Executive and Support Services	2,124	1,854	1,854	1,854
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.124</b>	<b>1,854</b>	<b>1,854</b>	<b>1,854</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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 [Estimates and Supplement to the Estimates](#).

## Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of March 4, 2025, the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

### **Community Living BC**

[Community Living British Columbia \(CLBC\)](#) is a Crown agency that provides supports and services to meet the disability-related needs of two groups of eligible individuals and their families in British Columbia:

- Adults with a diagnosis of developmental disability. Criteria include age of onset, intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior; and
- Adults who have a diagnosis of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or autism spectrum disorder (also known as pervasive developmental disorder) and significant limitations in adaptive functioning.

### **Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal**

The Employment and Assistance Appeal Tribunal is an administrative tribunal established under the authority of the [Employment and Assistance Act](#) to provide clients with an efficient and transparent appeal process that is independent from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. The Tribunal hears appeals on decisions made by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction to refuse, reduce or discontinue certain benefits or supplements. The Tribunal also hears appeals on decisions made by the Ministry of Children and Family Development to refuse, reduce or discontinue a subsidy under the Child Care Subsidy Act.

## Appendix B: Minister Mandate Letter



January 16, 2025

Honourable Sheila Malcolmson  
Minister of Social Development  
and Poverty Reduction  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Malcolmson:

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 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.

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- **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 Social Development and Poverty Reduction programs and initiatives to ensure our programs remain relevant, are efficient, ensure safe and strong communities, and reduce poverty. This is important in the context of current Provincial budget constraints and the priorities of communities in the province.
- Continue to develop tools and approaches to prevent poverty and increase income, focusing first on youth growing up in families living in poverty, and work with the Ministers of Health, Finance, Citizens' Services and others to ensure low- and moderate-income British Columbians receive and retain the federal and provincial benefits they are eligible for, beginning with the Canada Disability Benefit.
- With support from the Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility, lead government's work on accessibility initiatives.
- Support British Columbians struggling with the cost of food and unable to afford the basics by leading work on food security and find opportunities to support BC farmers and food producers in this work.
- 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.

- Lead work, with support from the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, to deliver skills and training initiatives for people facing multiple complex barriers that will enable them to access opportunities and build a dignified life.

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

- Support you to work with stakeholders, in particular with people with lived experience, to support the development and implementation of government's work to make BC more accessible and inclusive for all people.

You are also assigned a Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits whose focus will be to:

- Work with the Attorney General to support engagement of the non-profit sector in the 2025 review of the *Lobbyist Transparency Act*.
- Continue to strengthen government's relationship with the non-profit sector by acting as the point of contact within government on key issues affecting the sector and supporting the effectiveness of non-profit sector organizations, including through the Social Services Sector Roundtable.

You will work closely together and ensure your Parliamentary Secretaries receive 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.

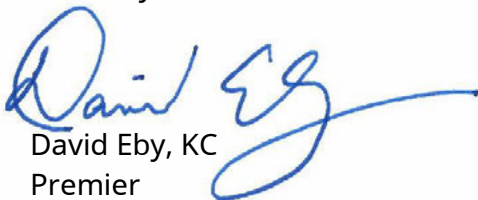
We have an obligation to protect and defend British Columbians, as well as seize opportunities, in these uncertain times.

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,

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

David Eby, KC  
Premier

cc: Dana Lajeunesse, MLA  
Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility

Joan Phillip, MLA  
Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits