

# Better Regulations for British Columbians

## 2022/23 Annual Report

### Message from the Minister

British Columbia is a wonderful place to live. At the same time, we're facing real challenges. The pandemic, economic uncertainty, labour shortages, and overall global issues have created headwinds for us all. Our government recognizes this and is committed to its focus of putting people first.

February, 2023, marked the one-year anniversary of our [StrongerBC Economic Plan](#), government's framework to build an inclusive and sustainable economy that works for everyone. The 2023 Better Regulations for British Columbians Annual Report features key actions our government has taken to improve services for people and businesses over the past fiscal year. This is a result of our commitment to listening to British Columbians and taking action on what matters to them, like affordable housing and safer communities.

This year's report focuses on the priorities of British Columbians, and our work to build a strong, sustainable, and inclusive economy that works for everyone. Whether it's improved health care, or continued work toward true and meaningful reconciliation, our government is investing in the well-being of people in B.C. now and for generations to come.

One of the ways we are building a more inclusive B.C. is through our Modernizing Language Initiative, so that everyone can see themselves reflected in government regulations and can feel more confident when accessing government services. We are the first province in Canada to systematically amend provincial laws to remove outdated gendered and binary language from regulations with our Miscellaneous Statutes (Modernization) Amendment Act, 2023. Updating terms such as he/she, chairman, and workmen with gender-neutral alternatives supports our StrongerBC Economic Plan by ensuring all British Columbians have access to government services regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or cultural beliefs.

Government is building a stronger B.C. for everyone. Since the StrongerBC Economic Plan was released, we've made significant progress towards improving life for British Columbians, through an economy that is inclusive, innovative, and sustainable.

Honourable Brenda Bailey  
Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation

## Goals and Objectives

British Columbia's long-standing commitment to regulatory and service improvement is supported by three main goals:

- Increasing access to quality government services that people count on;
- Promoting a modern, efficient, and effective regulatory system; and,
- Enhancing accountability for regulatory and service improvement activities.

This year's annual report highlights legislative, regulatory, and service improvements made over the past fiscal year to make life better for British Columbians. The initiatives showcase specific actions government has taken to ensure access to affordable and attainable housing, increase safety in our communities, improve health care, support a sustainable, clean, secure and fair economy, and foster innovation to streamline processes and services.

B.C. continues to be committed to true, lasting, and meaningful reconciliation. Various initiatives that took place over the past fiscal year highlight the continued work that is being done in this space. The report also provides an overview of the Province's regulatory requirement count as of March 31, 2023.

Our goal is to grow B.C.'s reputation as a leader in better, smarter, and more inclusive legislation, regulations and policies. If you have suggestions to address service improvement or efficiency in B.C.'s legislative frameworks and government processes, please contact us at [BetterRegulations@gov.bc.ca](mailto:BetterRegulations@gov.bc.ca).

# Accountability and Commitment

## Regulatory Requirements Count

In 2004, government instituted the Net Zero Increase commitment. This commitment established a regulatory requirement baseline count of 197,242 and committed B.C. to not exceed the baseline. As of March 31, 2023, the regulatory requirements count was 170,353.

Under B.C.'s Regulatory Reporting Act and regulations, government has a statutory obligation to report annually on its regulatory reform initiatives and count of the total number of regulatory requirements (the count). The count continues to ensure that we remain accountable and transparent in designing modern, effective, and efficient laws and regulations. To achieve this, all new or amended legislation and regulations must include an analysis of the potential impacts for people and businesses. Any changes to the number of regulatory requirements must be documented and reflected in the annual count.

A regulatory requirement is any action a person, business or government must take to access services, carry out business or meet legal responsibilities.

## Better Regulations for British Columbians Package

The Better Regulations for British Columbians annual process groups together minor changes to modernize B.C.'s regulatory framework and improve service delivery. It is an efficient way to make cross-government regulatory changes by clarifying, correcting, or repealing outdated information. In March 2023, we amended [a number of items](#) through the annual process to update, modernize or repeal outdated sections.

## Modernizing Language Initiative

Words matter when it comes to promoting inclusion and eliminating discrimination. Through an ongoing commitment to public service innovation, people throughout the province can now see themselves reflected in the intentional language used in B.C.'s legislative and regulatory frameworks. The Modernizing Language Initiative was launched in 2020 to systematically remove gendered and other non-inclusive references from B.C.'s regulations. Since this time we have amended more than 1,400 instances of outdated language from provincial regulations through the Better Regulations for British Columbians process.

This year, we expanded this important work to address outdated gendered, binary, and non-inclusive language within B.C.'s legislation. On March 30, 2023, the Miscellaneous Statutes (Modernization) Amendment Act, 2023 received royal assent and amended more than 2,300 instances of outdated gendered and binary terms from more than 200 provincial statutes, making B.C. the first province to systemically identify and amend these terms across legislation.

Modernizing our legislative and regulatory frameworks supports the StrongerBC Economic Plan by ensuring British Columbians have access to government services regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or cultural beliefs. Terms such as he/she, his/her, brother/sister, chairman or workmen were amended by substituting gender-neutral alternatives such as person, sibling, chair, and workers, or by repeating the earlier noun used in the statute or regulation.

These changes do not remove one's right to identify as a male or female; instead, updating these terms allow British Columbians of all identities to see themselves reflected in B.C.'s laws.

Outside of the Modernizing Language Initiative, the Province continues to take steps to include more diverse expressions of gender in ministry systems and services, such as:

- The Integrated Case Management system and other services available through the Ministry of Children and Family Development now allow non-binary as well as binary gender options.
- The Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, removed gendered language from the Health, Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in British Columbia, replacing it with gender-neutral language. The revision to the Code also created a requirement for new mines and mines undergoing substantial renovations to have a universal washroom facility, making this one of the first regulatory requirements for washrooms at workplaces in B.C.
- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs amended the Vancouver Charter to use gender-neutral language in approximately 80 sections. An additional change included sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination in accordance with the Human Rights Code.
- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs also amended the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Act with more inclusive language, replacing instances of the word "fraternal" with "collegial."

## 2022/23 Achievements

This year's report highlights improvements to programs or processes, new or revised legislation and regulations, or innovative approaches that improve access to services. Themes align with government initiatives identified in all Ministerial mandate letters and other provincial priorities, and are organized into the following categories:

- Attainable and Affordable Housing
- Safer Communities
- Improved Health Care
- A Sustainable, Clean, Secure and Fair Economy
- Continuing to Work Towards True and Meaningful Reconciliation
- Fostering Innovation Across Our Economy

More achievements from 2022/23 can be found online. Please visit our [Better Regulations for British Columbians webpage](#) to read more.

## Attainable and Affordable Housing

Attainable and affordable housing for all British Columbians is one of our government's top priorities. B.C. is leading a number of affordable and social housing initiatives, such as the creation of the new Housing Supply Act, putting new protections in place for homebuyers in B.C., expanding the Speculation and Vacancy Tax to new communities, allowing for new housing stability supplements and permitting the Province to acquire land for housing and community amenities near transit stations and bus exchanges.

### Housing Supply Act

To help deliver more homes for British Columbians, the Province introduced the new Housing Supply Act. The Act helps increase the supply of attainable and affordable housing by giving the Province the ability to set targets in municipalities with the greatest need and highest projected growth. These targets encourage municipalities to address local barriers to construction so that housing can get built faster, including updating zoning bylaws and streamlining local development approval processes.

### New Protections in Place for Homebuyers in B.C.

In response to widespread concerns about the province's competitive real estate market putting buyers at an unfair disadvantage, B.C. introduced a new, mandatory, three-day homebuyer protection period. The extra time will help buyers fully consider whether a purchase is right for them under any market conditions, including in the face of rising interest rates.

### Speculation and Vacancy Tax Expanded to New Communities

The Province's Speculation and Vacancy Tax is being expanded to the municipalities of North Cowichan, Duncan, Ladysmith, Lake Cowichan, Lions Bay and Squamish. The tax has helped return thousands of much needed homes to the market, and revenue is helping to build new homes in communities where the tax applies. Generating approximately \$315 million over the first four years of the tax, Canadian citizens or permanent residents who leave their homes vacant must pay 0.5 percent of their property's value, and foreign owners and satellite families must pay two percent of their property's value.

[Through the Homes for B.C. plan, and Budget 2023, the B.C. government is making the largest investment in housing in the province's history – \\$19 billion over 10 years. The Province has delivered nearly 74,000 more new homes in more than 100 communities since introducing the plan.](#)

### Housing Stability Supplement

To provide a new financial Housing Stability Supplement (HSS), the Employment and Assistance Regulation and the Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Regulation were amended. The regulations now provide temporary financial support for up to three months, which will help individuals and families on income assistance keep their housing when there is a temporary absence of a family member from the residence (e.g., they are receiving care in hospital) or there is a death of a member of the family. This initiative will help prevent homelessness for approximately 3,200 families in B.C. each year.

### Increased Housing, Services Near Transit Hubs

To accelerate housing development and to better serve people with community amenities near transit stations and bus exchanges, the Province facilitated land acquisition by amending the Transportation

Act. The changes now allow housing in mixed-use developments, along with childcare facilities, shops, schools, and health care and recreation centres. This promotes the development of livable, compact communities making it convenient for pedestrians, cyclists or people who use mobility aids to access the nearest transit station.

## Safer Communities

In B.C., we are dedicated to creating safer and healthier communities for all by addressing public safety concerns and providing accessible services. We have worked to expand the scope of practice for nurses, and improve mental health, addiction and transition services for youth.

### Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE)

Through the [SAJE program](#), young people transitioning from government care have access to a set of enhanced supports. Because people who have been in government care are more likely to experience homelessness or a mental health crisis at some point in their lives, these supports provide a seamless transition to adulthood, help prevent homelessness and provide mental health assistance. The supports implemented in 2022/23 include: a no-limit earnings exemption; rent supplements; more flexible housing supports; and increased medical/dental benefits. Transition support from SAJE Navigators, and SAJE Guides began in parts of the province in 2023, with full implementation across the province to be completed in 2024. In 2023/2024 SAJE eligibility will be expanded and monthly income supports, funding to develop life skills, build cultural connections and for counselling will be added.

### Integrated Child and Youth Teams

B.C. has established 12 Integrated Child and Youth (ICY) teams in communities to better support children and youth facing mental health and substance-use challenges. ICY teams use an outreach model to provide mental health assessment and screening, consultation and therapeutic services for children and youth within a school district boundary. This includes First Nations operated schools, independent schools, francophone schools, alternative schools, or students who are homeschooled or unschooled. When needed ICY teams connect children, youth and families to higher intensity and more specialized services or help transition young adults to adult services and supports.

### Nurse Prescribing Initiative

The scope of practice of registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses has expanded in B.C. to include prescribing medications for opioid use disorder. Qualified nurses can now complete training to begin prescribing medications to treat opioid use disorder. Nurse prescribing is being implemented in collaboration with First Nations communities.

[B.C. is the first province in Canada to expand the scope of practice for nurses. As of February 2023, 112 nurses have completed the training with another 233 registered across all health authorities.](#)

### Enhanced Mental Health, Substance-Use Services in Place of Young People

B.C. has expanded addictions care in the province, so young people living with substance-use challenges and their families can access new and better services closer to home. Programs will be available in more communities and include approximately 130 new health care workers to support young people. Staff include therapists, social workers, nurses and nurse practitioners, counsellors, and Indigenous patient navigators and liaisons. The new and enhanced services range from prevention and early intervention to intensive treatment and crisis intervention.



## Improved Health Care

Delivering comprehensive and quality public health care services to the people of B.C. is of the utmost importance. Improvements to B.C.'s health care system are being made through the Provincial [Health Human Resources Strategy](#). From updating payment models for doctors to bringing in more internationally educated physicians and nurses, and improving pharmacy services, we are taking important steps to improve B.C.'s health care system.

### Health Human Resources Strategy Improves Access to Health Care, Puts People First

Improving care for people in British Columbia is essential, and the Province has launched a new health human resources strategy to invest in B.C.'s health care workers. The new strategy supports the addition of more doctors, nurses, and other health care workers and professionals, as well as expanding training opportunities at postsecondary institutions. The strategy lays out actions to improve workforce retention and balance workload, and will guide the next steps in building a strong, resilient public health care system in B.C.

### Incentives Bringing Physicians to Family Practices

People in B.C. will now benefit from better access to care as the Province hires more doctors to work in our communities. A new program is encouraging new-to practice family doctors to take up full-service practices in B.C. The program offers a \$25,000 signing bonus, up to \$50,000 medical debt forgiveness and a \$75,000 payment to help establish a clinic. As of April 2023, 136 doctors have signed on to the program, with another 45 discussing the terms of the contract and suitable clinic placements.

### Health Care System Strengthened by New Payment Model for Doctors

To help protect, support, and strengthen B.C.'s health care system, the Province, in collaboration with provincial doctors, has designed a new payment model for community-based full-service family doctors. This payment model ensures that family doctors receive more equitable payment for their work and recognizes their value in providing full-service primary care to patients. Under the new payment model, B.C. will be better able to attract new family doctors and retain existing doctors and provide physicians more flexibility to create the kind of practice that works best for them and their patients.

### Pharmacy Services Improvement

To relieve pressure on primary care providers in B.C. and enable people to access care more quickly, pharmacists are now able to adapt and renew prescriptions for a wider range of medications. This new measure enables patients to visit a local pharmacy for assessment and recommendations for treatment, instead of seeing a doctor or visiting the emergency room at a hospital. Expansion of pharmacists' ability to issue prescriptions for minor ailments as well as contraception, began in Spring 2023.

There are more than 6,500 registered pharmacists in B.C. A 2021 national survey found that 93% of Canadians would trust pharmacists to be a first point of contact in the health care system.

### More Internationally Educated Family Doctors on the Way

The Practice Ready Assessment BC (PRA-BC) program has been expanded to address the shortage of family doctors in the province. Upon completion of a successful assessment, physicians receive a provisional license and are placed in a community for a three-year return of service. Expansion of the

program is part of our government's work to provide immediate solutions for people who need to access health services.

#### Supporting International Nurses in B.C.'s Health Care System

B.C. is addressing nursing demand by providing support for internationally educated nurses (IENs) entering the province's health care system. Registering as an IEN is a complicated, costly, and lengthy process. To address this, B.C. created a more streamlined process reducing the time to obtain a registration decision by over at least a year. The Province is also supporting IENs with bursaries to offset the costs of assessments, language testing, skill evaluation and educational upgrading. New nurse navigators are guiding IENs through the various processes required to practice in B.C., providing immigration and licensing help, relocation information, job placement and employment support.

## A Sustainable, Clean, Secure and Fair Economy

A strong, fair economy and healthy society go hand in hand. Our commitment to seeing everyone in the province succeed is demonstrated through numerous initiatives. These include cost-of-living credits, consumer and business protections, updated environmental regulations, affordable child care spaces and strengthened disaster financial assistance.

### Families in B.C. Benefitting from \$10-a-Day Child Care

More families in B.C. will save thousands of dollars per year as more child care spaces convert to the \$10 a Day [ChildCareBC program](#). The program reduces the average cost of child care from \$1,000 to \$200 a month, saving families an average of \$800 a month per child. The program expansion continues to help build affordable, high-quality, child care as a core service British Columbians can depend on.

Over 130 facilities, representing approximately 6,100 spaces, have been welcomed into the \$10 a Day ChildCareBC program through the 2022 expansion.

### Canada's First Delivery-Fee Cap Legislation

B.C. has become the first province in Canada to implement a permanent cap on fees charged by food delivery companies. The [Food Delivery Service Fee Act](#) limits the fees that delivery companies can charge restaurants for core ordering and delivery services, ensuring that they do not exceed 20 per cent of the dollar value of an order (excluding tax and tips). Food delivery companies can offer optional enhanced services for higher fees. The legislation also protects drivers by ensuring delivery companies do not transfer costs onto drivers by reducing their compensation.

### Expanded Small Business Tax Rate Access

More B.C. businesses will be able to grow through expanded access to the small business tax rate. Growing businesses will be eligible for the B.C. small business tax rate for longer, as the tax rate will now not phase out until the \$50 million taxable capital threshold ceiling. Before this update, access to the rate ended when businesses had \$15 million or more of taxable capital. This update supports the continued growth and success of small businesses in B.C.

### Strengthened Disaster Financial Assistance

Regulatory changes ensure more people, communities and businesses can access and receive increased benefits from the [Disaster Financial Assistance](#) program. The program is designed to help communities and private sector applicants (homeowners, residential tenants, business owners, farm owners and charitable organizations) cover uninsurable disaster-related losses and recover from emergencies. The regulatory changes include allowing the Province to provide up-front contributions toward community recovery projects, increasing contributions toward community recovery projects, and expanding eligibility to cover more people and more small businesses.

### Protection from High-Cost Lenders

Financially vulnerable British Columbians now have better borrowing protections in place through amendments made to the Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act. Businesses that offer high-cost credit products, such as loans and leases with more than 32% interest, must be licensed by Consumer Protection BC. The changes also establish new transparency requirements and borrower protections, prohibit certain fees, set requirements for loan agreements, and establish borrower rights and remedies.

### Cost-of-Living Credit

BC Hydro, FortisBC and municipal electric utilities worked with the Province to deliver cost-of-living credits to over two million residential and commercial electricity customers in B.C. struggling in the face of rising prices for the goods and services they rely on. Residential customers received a \$100 bill credit, equivalent to about one month of electricity for a family living in a detached home or more than two months of electricity for a family living in an apartment. Commercial customers received a one-time bill credit based on their prior year's electricity usage, averaging close to \$490.

### Soil Relocation Project

Changes to the soil relocation regulatory framework enhance environmental protection and facilitate compliance and enforcement efforts. These amendments include the introduction of a new notification system for relocating soil from prescribed commercial/ industrial sites over a certain volume and establishing a new registration requirement for receiving sites that accept soil over 20,000 cubic metres.

## Continuing to Work Towards True and Meaningful Reconciliation

A commitment to true, lasting, and meaningful reconciliation means building a B.C. where everyone feels seen, heard and has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Through partnerships with Indigenous Peoples, organizations, and communities we continue to support opportunities to be full partners in building an inclusive and sustainable province. Updates to provincial laws and regulations, as well as the commitment to the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (B.C. Declaration Act) advances reconciliation in B.C. in a meaningful way.

### Indigenous Jurisdiction Over Indigenous Child and Family Services

Amendments to the Child, Family and Community Service Act and the Adoption Act create a path for Indigenous governing bodies to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services. The overarching goal is greater alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the B.C. Declaration Act.

The Child, Family and Community Service Act amendments provide a pathway for Indigenous Peoples to implement their own Indigenous laws over child and family services, create a new Indigenous Child Welfare Director position within the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and provide for greater involvement of Indigenous communities in child and family services through agreements with the Province.

The Adoption Act amendments strengthen collaboration with Indigenous communities and consent-based decision making with Indigenous governing bodies on adoption placements and adoptions for Indigenous children who are in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. These amendments represent the largest changes to child welfare legislation in B.C. in more than 25 years. The changes help to eliminate barriers and gaps within legislation so that Indigenous children and youth remain connected to their families, culture and communities.

[Indigenous rightsholders, Modern Treaty Nations, Indigenous governing bodies, Métis Nation B.C. and other Indigenous partners, such as the First Nations Leadership Council, were consulted on the amendments to the Child, Family and Community Service Act, and the Adoption Act.](#)

### New Directives Uphold Indigenous Rights

The Province, working in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, is taking important steps to better protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and implement the B.C. Declaration Act. A series of new directives establishes approaches to civil legal action for government lawyers that uphold Indigenous human rights and Aboriginal rights, prioritize and promote resolution, innovation and negotiated settlement, and reduce the potential for court proceedings.

## Fostering Innovation Across Our Economy

Modernization efforts deliver better government services through new and improved digitized and streamlined processes. Eliminating the need for in person services allows for flexibility and supports British Columbians who live in rural or remote communities, have disabilities or would otherwise have difficulty navigating in-person processes. The development of new online processes such as the BC Decision Aid System, Accessibility Feedback Tool, Community Fire Risk Reduction Dashboard, BC Business Registry, mobile heat system alerts, and electronic point of sale and documentation systems, make it easier and more convenient to access government information and services.

### Accessibility Feedback Tool

Individuals throughout B.C. can now register a barrier they experienced in accessing provincial government services by using the online [Accessibility Feedback Tool](#). People with disabilities often face barriers to participating fully and equally in society. Barriers can take many forms, such as buildings with no wheelchair ramps or wheelchair accessible washrooms, forms that are not available in Braille or large print, and videos that do not use captioning or American Sign Language (ASL). The Accessible British Columbia Act requires government to publish an accessibility plan which will be updated every three years and include how feedback is being addressed.

### Tobacco and Fuel Tax Exemption Simplification Project

A new electronic point of sale verification and documentation system is replacing the paper-based process for tax-exempt sales of tobacco and fuel made on First Nations land in B.C. The Province engaged First Nations Bands and retailers of tax-exempt tobacco and fuel as part of the [Tobacco and Fuel Tax Exemption Simplification Project](#) (TAFT). TAFT offers real-time electronic verification of eligibility for tax-exempt tobacco and fuel purchases on First Nations land, providing a faster and more efficient process, and eliminating the outdated paper-based documentation system.

### Launch of Preparedness, Plan for Heat Events, Heat Alert

The new [BC Heat Alert and Response System](#) (BC HARS) helps ensure that British Columbians stay safe during extreme heat events. BC HARS provides a series of actions that different ministries, orders of government, public health organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the public can take to ensure health and safety before and during a heat event. In addition, the provincial government will support First Nations and local authorities in taking actions based on their individual community heat plans and processes. The Province has created an [Extreme Heat Preparedness Guide](#) targeted at helping people prepare their residences for extreme heat. For rare extreme heat emergencies, the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness is prepared to issue broadcast intrusive emergency alerts on cell phones, radio and TVs.

[Heat warnings are likely to occur multiple times per summer, whereas extreme heat emergencies may only occur once or twice a decade in British Columbia.](#)

### Community Fire Risk Reduction Dashboard

The British Columbia Office of the Fire Commissioner partnered with Statistics Canada to develop a new Community Fire Risk Reduction Dashboard (CFRRD). By linking fire rates and geographical data with Statistics Canada's new Geospatial Data Visualization platform, the CFRRD provides geographical information to fire services to identify neighborhoods at greatest risk of residential fires. The data helps fire services decide where to concentrate fire prevention efforts to help keep communities safe.

### BC Decision Aid System

Tree-fruit growers and their orchards in the Kootenay region are benefitting from the introduction of the [BC Decision Aid System \(DAS\)](#). BC DAS provides time sensitive advice about pest management with software that collects and integrates daily forecasts from weather stations. Data can then be used to predict insect population trends, helping growers better prepare for and respond to pest-management issues, maintain healthy orchards, protect fruit trees, and provide valuable economic activity in the region.

### B.C. Business Registry Website

The updated [BC Business Registry](#) makes registering and managing business information easier, quicker and more secure. In the past, small businesses in B.C. could register a business online, but any changes needed to be submitted by paper. With business registry functionality added to the site, businesses can now update their information online.

[Replacing legacy systems with modern digital services will reduce the effort and time needed for people to complete transactions and filings, manage accounts, pay for services, and maintain registrations.](#)