

TogetherBC:

British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy

2022 Annual Report



*TOGETHERBC: BRITISH COLUMBIA'S POVERTY
REDUCTION STRATEGY 2022 ANNUAL REPORT*

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Message from the Minister



TOGETHERBC 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Everyone deserves to live a life of dignity, with the services and supports they need not just to survive, but thrive. That's what TogetherBC was about from the

beginning – taking action to address the root causes of poverty and supporting people to live full, healthy and happy lives.

The actions laid out in TogetherBC and other government initiatives worked quickly to reduce poverty in B.C. – we met our legislated targets of reducing child poverty by half and overall poverty by a quarter five years ahead of schedule, and then exceeded them. Our work has built a path out of poverty for hundreds of thousands of people since we first started this journey.

However, we still have much more to do – and new challenges must be met. Global inflation, the rising cost of housing, and other economic headwinds have begun to wear away at the important progress we've made. We cannot and will not rest in our efforts to make life better for people.

From the beginning we recognized that over time we would need to adjust policies and targets to meet emerging challenges and to continue making progress in reducing poverty in B.C. That's why we're hard at work on a new poverty reduction strategy.

The new strategy will be informed by engagement with Indigenous Peoples in accordance with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and will be designed

to meet the emerging challenges before us, and position us for whatever is to come.

Whether it's raising the minimum wage, improving health services, providing families with affordable child care, or opening up access to the training and education people need to succeed – reducing poverty is a whole of government effort. People enter poverty for many reasons, and their path out of poverty won't always look the same.

That's why we're building the new strategy on a foundation of lived experience, and seeking input from people around the province as we develop the new strategy for release in the spring of 2024.

Everyone deserves the opportunity to participate in their community, feel valued, and share in the prosperity of our province. Together, we will face the challenges before us, and together we will build a stronger, more equitable province, for everyone.

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

SHEILA MALCOLMSON

MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION

Introduction

In 2022, people in British Columbia celebrated some return to normal activities as the province moved through the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic. While January brought the first cases of the Omicron variant, by the end of the year, many long-term restrictions on activities had been removed in B.C.

As the province continued to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, new challenges like global inflation emerged that disproportionately affected people with low incomes, while existing challenges, like housing affordability, intensified.

As the cost of many essential goods and services rose, including food, housing and transportation, the cost of living started becoming a greater challenge for more people in B.C.

Despite growing challenges, people, communities and the province continued to work together to create paths to opportunity and overall poverty rates remained well below government’s legislated targets.

As of 2021, B.C.’s total poverty rate had decreased 45 per cent from 2016 levels, and the rate of child poverty (under 18) had decreased by 54.6 per cent.

Strong collaboration between government and key partners, including Indigenous leadership and the non-profit sector, was key to maintaining these gains in the face of global economic conditions that are making life more expensive for families.

Through 2022, the Province’s efforts to address and reduce poverty broadly fell into three areas of TogetherBC:

Cost of Living: Responding to significant global inflation and its impact on B.C. by

working to improve affordability and helping people meet basic needs. Key initiatives included:

- » Enhancing the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative to offer thousands more childcare spaces at fees reduced by up to \$900 per month, per child
- » Expanding food security initiatives to ensure better access to fresh, healthy foods in our communities
- » Increasing the minimum wage

Reconciliation: Taking substantive action to support reconciliation with Indigenous partners through legislative and policy changes that promote self-determining communities. Key initiatives included:

- » Releasing the Declaration Act Action Plan, which includes 89 actions towards the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- » Removing barriers for Indigenous Peoples exercising jurisdiction over child and family services
- » Collaborating to build economies and self-governing communities

Opportunity and social inclusion:

Continuing to build strong public programs to prevent people from entering poverty and help people find a path out of it. Key initiatives for the year included:

- » Increasing (by more than double) the number of community integration specialists working with those experiencing—or at risk of—homelessness to connect them with financial assistance and community resources
- » Providing complex-care housing to address the needs of people who have overlapping mental-health challenges, substance-use issues, trauma and acquired brain injuries
- » Providing increased access to education and training opportunities

These are only a few examples of the government’s efforts in 2022.



TogetherBC: B.C.'s Poverty Reduction Strategy sets out ambitious targets to reduce the province's overall poverty rate by 25 per cent, and the child poverty rate by 50 per cent, by 2024.



In 2021, British Columbia continued to exceed its legislated targets.¹ As of 2021, B.C.'s total poverty rate had decreased 45 per cent from 2016 levels, and the rate of child poverty (under 18) had decreased by 54.6 per cent. However, 2021 saw an increase in total poverty and child poverty compared to 2020, likely owing to the end of temporary COVID-19 income benefits. As of 2021, 447,000 people were living in poverty in B.C., an increase of 65,000 over the year before.

While B.C. continues to meet its legislated targets, there are 70,000 children living in poverty in B.C. and new and intensifying challenges like rising global inflation are challenging the progress we've made to date. More work needs to be done to sustain progress and ensure that future actions support those who need it most.

This annual report describes new or enhanced initiatives implemented in 2022 across government to reduce poverty and expand the social safety net across many key areas.

These areas include housing, childcare, income support and health services.

¹ The Market Basket Measure (MBM) is reported by Statistics Canada with a 2-year lag. 2020 MBM data was made available in March 2023.

British Columbia's poverty reduction framework

Before the development of TogetherBC, B.C. had one of the highest rates of poverty in Canada. In 2016, 760,000 people were living below the poverty line in this province, 147,000 of them children. At that time, B.C. was the only province in Canada without a poverty reduction strategy. In Fall 2017, the Province began work on the province's first strategy, TogetherBC.



The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act (the Act), which the B.C. Legislature passed unanimously in November 2018, laid an important foundation for the strategy. It also ensured that poverty reduction would always be a priority for the province. The Act outlines four guiding principles, six priority action areas and 13 key population groups to guide B.C.'s approach to poverty reduction. The Act also commits government to achieving two important poverty reduction targets by 2024:

➔ To reduce the overall poverty rate by 25 per cent

➔ To reduce the child (under 18) poverty rate by 50 per cent

TIMELINE OF POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND REPORTING

- OCT 2017 – MAR 2018**
The Province completed broad, province-wide public engagement with people living in poverty and their friends, families and advocates. Participants also included community organizations, service providers, local governments, Indigenous communities, businesses, industry associations, and unions.
- JULY 2018**
The Province released a What We Heard About Poverty in B.C. report informed by this engagement.
- NOV 2018**
The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act passed unanimously in the legislature.
- MAR 2019**
The Province released its poverty reduction strategy, TogetherBC.
- DEC 2020**
The Province released the first annual report on the strategy.
- OCT 2021**
The Province released the second annual report.
- OCT 2022**
The Province released the third annual report.

REPORTING – ANNUAL REPORT MUST BE PRODUCED BY OCTOBER 1, OF EACH YEAR, AND MUST DESCRIBE:

- ➔ **the actions taken to implement the strategy**
- ➔ **the effects of the strategy on poverty reduction**
- ➔ **the progress made towards the targets**
-

SIX PRIORITY ACTION AREAS:

- ➔ **Housing**
- ➔ **Families, children and youth**
- ➔ **Education**
- ➔ **Employment**
- ➔ **Income supports**
- ➔ **Social supports**

FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- ➔ **Affordability**
- ➔ **Opportunity**
- ➔ **Social inclusion**
- ➔ **Reconciliation**

TARGETS – BASED ON THE 2016 MARKET BASKET MEASURE (MBM):

- ➔ **Reduce the overall poverty rate by 25 per cent by 2024**
- ➔ **Reduce the child (under 18) poverty rate by 50 per cent by 2024**

THE MINISTER'S POVERTY REDUCTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MUST INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE FOLLOWING GROUPS; OF THESE, HALF MUST BE WOMEN:

- » **Indigenous Peoples**
- » **Persons living in poverty**
- » **Persons living with disabilities**
- » **Local governments**
- » **Organizations that advocate for persons living in poverty**
- » **The business community**
- » **Unions**
- » **Academics**
- » **Persons living in rural and remote communities**

THE STRATEGY MUST BE UPDATED AT LEAST ONCE EVERY FIVE YEARS. IN DEVELOPING AND UPDATING THE STRATEGY, 13 KEY POPULATION GROUPS MUST BE CONSIDERED:

- » **Children**
- » **Youth**
- » **Women and persons of all genders**
- » **Indigenous Peoples**
- » **Persons living with disabilities**
- » **Persons living in rural and remote communities**
- » **Immigrants and refugees**
- » **LGBTQ2S+ persons**
- » **Seniors**
- » **Persons and families working and earning low incomes**
- » **Persons living with mental illness or addiction**
- » **Persons living with or fleeing abuse**
- » **Persons of colour**



Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee Independent Commentary

As part of the province's commitment to accountability on poverty reduction, the Poverty Reduction Act legislates a requirement for government to convene an independent Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee to examine and report out on government's progress on poverty reduction each year.

The current members of the committee are:

- » Zahra Esmail (chair), chief executive officer (CEO) for Vantage Point
- » Mebrat Beyene, executive director of WISH and co-chair of Living in Community
- » Cheryl Casimer, a citizen of the Ktunaxa Nation and a long-standing advocate for First Nations issues and perspectives committed to building better bridges of understanding between neighbouring cultures
- » Rosanna May McGregor, executive director for the Cariboo Friendship Society in Williams Lake
- » Bradley (Brad) Donald Mills, chief executive officer of Mills Printing and Stationery
- » Adrienne Marie Montani, executive director for First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society
- » Krishna Murthy Pendakur, a professor at Simon Fraser University who studies the statistical and econometric issues related to the measurement of economic discrimination, inequality and poverty, including work with visible minorities and Indigenous peoples
- » Cori Ramsay, a councillor for the City of Prince George and municipal director for the Regional District of Fraser Fort George
- » Richard Schabler, former youth in care who works with the Community Action Network in New Westminster
- » Kirsten Sikora, communicator and community organizer
- » Lissa Dawn Smith, elected vice-president for the Métis Nation of BC where she is minister responsible for Métis rights, justice and Métis veterans
- » Stephanie Rosina Smith, president of the BC Government and Service Employees' Union
- » Caitlin Ashley Lind Wright, Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS) office coordinator and a legal advocate

The following is the independent committee's report on government's actions to address poverty in 2022, and their recommendations about opportunities for further improvement.

This 2022 TogetherBC Annual Report describes many important strides made by the provincial government to address the depth and breadth of poverty in B.C. This note by the Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee outlines some of the areas in which we are noticing progress. However, we are nonetheless concerned at the high number of individuals, families and children that remain in poverty. In spite of many strong efforts and initiatives, food and rent price inflation persist, the housing crisis has not eased, and the situation for many British Columbians living in poverty continues to be precarious. We understand the connection between mental health, trauma, addiction and poverty, and remain concerned about the opioid crisis, the lack of suitable housing for British Columbians, rising food insecurity, and increasing poverty for adults 65 and over. As this Poverty Reduction Strategy enters its final year and the development of the next strategy is underway, we look forward to a new strategy that will focus on meaningful change in these important areas.

LEGISLATED TARGETS

The legislated target for the five-year period beginning on January 1, 2019, is to reduce the poverty rate among all persons by 25 per cent from its 2016 level and to reduce the poverty rate among persons under 18 years of age by 50 per cent from its 2016 level.

TARGETS MET; PROGRESS AND REGRESS

In Canada, poverty lines are based on Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure (MBM) of consumption needs, which is revised every 10 years based on current consumption patterns. The MBM was recently revised to a 2018 consumption base, and we therefore report on estimated poverty rates using this MBM 2018. Here, we refer to poverty rates reported in Statistics Canada's "Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type" released in May 2023 (Table number 11-10-0135-01), and reproduced in Appendix B.

In B.C., the poverty rate among all persons in 2016 was 16.0 per cent, so the legislated target is 75% of this rate, or 12.0 per cent. By 2019, that rate had dropped to 11.9 per cent, and so the legislated target was met. In 2020, the poverty rate among all persons dropped even further, to 7.6 per cent. But, by 2021, after pandemic-related transfers had ended, the poverty rate among all persons rose to 8.8 per cent.

The child poverty rate in B.C., that of persons aged under 18, was 17.4 per cent in 2016, so the legislated target is half this rate or 8.7 per cent. By 2019, the child poverty rate had dropped to 7.3 per cent, and so the legislated target was met. In 2020, the child poverty rate dropped even further, to 5.0 per cent. By 2021, after pandemic-related transfers had ended, the child poverty rate rose to 7.9 per cent.

The increase in poverty among all persons between 2020 and 2021 was driven by increases in child poverty and increases in poverty among the elderly. Poverty among people aged 18 to 64 was stable at 9.5 per cent in 2020 and 2021. This is because most pandemic-related income transfers targeted workers (who dominate the population aged 18 to 64).



These changes in poverty statistics were life-changing for hundreds of thousands of people. Between 2016 and 2020, almost 400,000 British Columbians moved out of poverty, including more than 100,000 children. However, the increase in child poverty between 2020 and 2021 of almost 3 percentage points is similarly important. The number of children in poverty in B.C. rose by roughly 25,000 between 2020 and 2021.

We therefore report that the Province of British Columbia has continued to meet its legislated targets of poverty reduction for both adults and children since 2019. However, we are concerned that with the end of pandemic-related income-transfers both overall poverty and child poverty rose between 2020 and 2021, the last year for which we have data.

POLICY APPROACHES IN BC

B.C.'s Poverty Reduction Strategy has six key priority areas. The 2022 Annual Report outlines actions taken to address each area: housing; families, children and youth; education; employment; income supports; and, social supports.

In 2022, many new initiatives were introduced that were aimed at concerns raised in the strategy, including: complex care housing to be built over three years; the construction of new affordable housing units across the province; the ChildCareBC New Spaces Fund; the BC Affordability Credit, and others. While we are pleased to see this progress, it will take time for the impact of these initiatives to be felt by people living in poverty.

The Province took actions in 2022 related to policies impacting Indigenous populations. This includes releasing the Declaration Act Action Plan, which includes 86 actions towards the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Service Amendment Act was also passed and seeks to prevent poverty for Indigenous children and youth. We think these may turn out to be good policy initiatives. We will be paying attention to how community experiences shift as a result of both

of these changes over the next several years and anticipate a continued commitment to reconciliation from the Province of B.C.

Housing continues to be the most pressing and urgent issue facing communities experiencing poverty across B.C. We are pleased to see new investments related to Complex Care Housing as a priority over the next three years to support those with compounding barriers, as well as commitments to increase affordable housing for families, seniors and/or people with disabilities. It will be important that these new housing initiatives result in "net new" units to ensure housing stock is truly increasing. The design and development of these housing facilities will be important to promote social connectedness, safety, and to accommodate persons of varying household size, ability and cultural identity.

We also applaud the more general support for increased supply of private sector housing. The private sector has a very important role to play in alleviating the housing crisis and measures taken by the Province to ease building of new rentals across B.C. may help. Climate change is at a level of crisis and is on the minds of most everyone right now; it is clear that the Province has been looking at ways to support sustainability. However, greater response to climate change is urgently needed, with respect paid to its disproportionate impact on people living in poverty. For example, increasing energy bills related to heating and cooling costs are creating hardship for the "working poor". Extreme weather causes additional risks to the unhoused or under housed, up to and including death. The impact of the climate crisis on First Nations people and communities is serious. Specifically, rivers are at extreme lows impacting wild salmon stocks that many First Nations rely on for harvesting; forest fires are burning up berries and medicine that are typically harvested during summer months to supplement food sources for use over the winter months; and fires causing the forced movement of deer, moose, and elk that are typically harvested in early fall to fill freezers. All of these climate crisis impacts are detrimental

to Indigenous ways of life and put an additional strain on First Nations communities' ability to supplement food sources, and have a direct correlation to poverty levels and food security.

While government initiatives are underway related to climate change through many ministries, centering the work on its connection to poverty reduction is critical and is a recommendation for the next Poverty Reduction Strategy. More needs to be done to keep all people safely and appropriately housed during extreme weather episodes, and to support First Nations communities to maintain important food and cultural practices.

We note that working age single adults continue to have significantly higher poverty rates than other populations in 2022. Focused support for these individuals who often "fall through the cracks" need to be developed.

Lone-parent families also have a high poverty rate and cannot work without childcare for their young children. Therefore, a key measure to help reduce child and family poverty is to build an affordable, accessible, high quality childcare system. We look forward to a continued provincial commitment to prioritize childcare investments to improve access for low-income families.

B.C. made good progress in 2022 on increasing supports for youth transitioning out of care, including extending temporary housing and support agreements, new rent subsidies, ending benefit deductions from earnings for Agreements with Young Adults and other policy enhancements. However, ending the high proportion of youth from care who experience homelessness remains an urgent concern and we look forward to the additional supports promised for 2023-24.

We recognize and appreciate the investment in food security for Indigenous and general populations in B.C. made by the Province, in particular, the investments made to United Way B.C. to support regional Food Hubs and to invest in critical food security infrastructure. While many efforts are being made to connect markets with food hubs and other community food distributors and to rescue and redistribute food, we know that the best way to combat food insecurity is adequate income.

Many underlying trends in economic development are pushing wage inequality upwards, with more big winners and more big losers in an increasingly polarized economy. The Province needs to pay more attention to factors under its control that influence the distribution of labour income. With that in mind, we are pleased to see an increase in the minimum wage to \$15.65 per hour. The Province could also: increase the power of private sector labour unions to organize, negotiate and encourage profit-sharing from firms; increase the publicly funded provision of training, apprenticeships and trades education; consider wage subsidies for low-wage workers; and further increase the minimum wage. The main driver of poverty is low income from work. Anything the Province can do to support workers to afford the cost of living in B.C. will contribute to the prevention and reduction of poverty.

We anticipate that key learnings from the past three years will contribute to a stronger, bolder, and even more impactful next Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2024.

Measuring our progress

B.C.'S POVERTY REDUCTION TARGETS

The Act set the target of a 25 per cent reduction in the overall poverty rate and a 50 per cent reduction in the poverty rate for people under 18 by 2024.

B.C. uses the Market Basket Measure (MBM) to measure progress on poverty reduction. The MBM is Canada's official measure of poverty. It's based on the cost of a specific basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living. MBM thresholds are set for specific communities and represent the cost of purchasing specified quantities of food, clothing, shelter, transportation and other necessities for a family of two adults and two children in the region. This is then adjusted for other family sizes. The basket is updated periodically to reflect changes in society that affect what is needed to maintain a basic standard of living. Statistics Canada is initiating a review of this measure in 2023, including assessment of work to better reflect the realities of living in northern communities.

Data on poverty rates is developed by Statistics Canada and there is a two-year delay. As such, when the Act was established in 2018, B.C. used 2016 as the baseline year for measuring the proportion of people living below the poverty line. This is because that was the most current data at the time. For this annual report, the most recent data available is for 2021 (released in May 2023). As with previous annual reports, this report also uses the new MBM 2018-base data, rather than the 2008-base data that was available in 2016.²

PROGRESS ON POVERTY REDUCTION

B.C. first met its poverty reduction targets in 2019, then continued to exceed its targets in 2020 and 2021. However, poverty rates began to

rise again in 2021. Between 2020 and 2021, the overall poverty rate increased from 7.6 per cent to 8.8 per cent. For people under 18, the rate increased from 5 per cent to 7.9 per cent.

While B.C.'s legislation includes targets for reducing both general poverty and child poverty, the Province monitors trends for other key populations:

- » Working-age singles (18-64) continued to have significantly higher poverty rates than other populations
- » The poverty rate for working-age adults was stable between 2020 and 2021
- » For working-age singles, the rate decreased slightly from 29.7 to 28.2 per cent
- » The 2021 poverty rate for non-elderly singles (18-64) was a significant improvement over 2016, when 43.7 per cent lived in poverty
- » For adults 65 and over, the rate increased from 3.7 per cent to 7 per cent—this means that while seniors continue to have lowest poverty rates among any age group, they saw the greatest percentage increase in poverty between 2020 and 2021



² In 2018, Statistics Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada began a comprehensive review to update the base measure established in 2008-2010. This process resulted in changes to the MBM that better reflect current living expenses and consumption patterns. The data for the 2018-base MBM was released on Sept. 8, 2020. This report uses the 2018-base MBM. All previous years' data has been updated to reflect this base.

Despite new challenges eroding gains between 2020 and 2021, poverty rates remained significantly below levels in 2016, and significantly exceeded legislated reductions. For people of all ages, poverty was 45 per cent lower, and child poverty was 54.6 per cent lower than it was in 2016.

We recognize the urgency of taking action to address economic headwinds, and working to protect and build on our gains – while also highlighting that our shared efforts to address poverty helped 313,000 people – 77,000 of them children, find a path out of poverty between 2016 and 2021.

We also note the role that COVID-19 relief played in reducing poverty in 2020 by providing a strong and stable foundation for workers and families to navigate a challenging time with the support of federal and provincial COVID-19 relief benefits, such as

- ◇ The Canada Emergency Recovery Benefit
- ◇ The B.C. Emergency Benefit for Workers
- ◇ The BC Recovery Benefit

It is likely that at least part of the uptick in poverty in 2021 was due to these benefits ending. Learnings about the role these supports and others like them played in poverty reduction will inform government’s efforts to maintain and deepen action on poverty reduction as a new strategy is developed for release in 2024.

TABLE 1: 2021 MARKET BASKET MEASURE

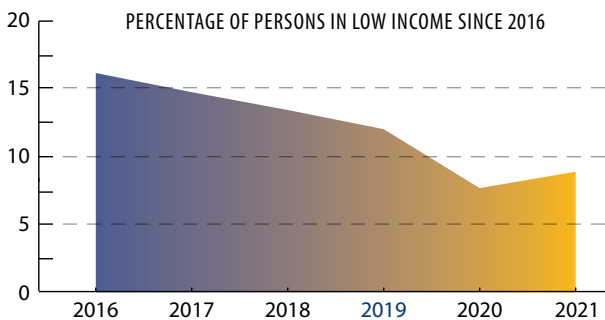
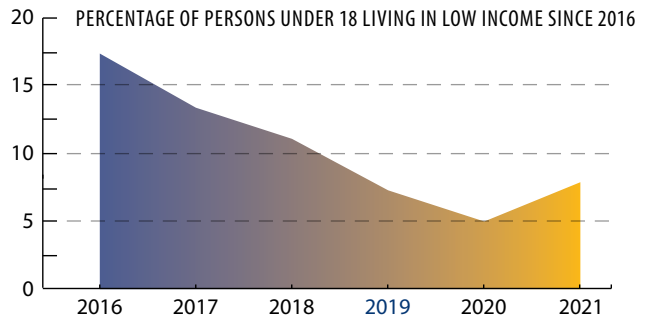


TABLE 2: 2021 MARKET BASKET MEASURE



Another way B.C. tracks poverty trends is by measuring the percentage of people who live in deep poverty, or whose income only reaches 75 per cent of the MBM threshold. In 2021, 4.7 per cent of families were living in deep poverty, an increase from 3.6 per cent in 2020.

Finally, the Province tracks the average depth of poverty. Statistics Canada calculates the depth of poverty by taking the average family income as a percentage of the MBM threshold.

In 2021, poverty deepened slightly, by an average of 0.6% over income levels in 2020. Unfortunately, families with children under the age of 18 saw greater challenges, with their buying power declining by 8 per cent over 2020 levels as global inflation challenged families throughout B.C.

We have made tremendous gains in addressing poverty in B.C., but changing conditions are threatening to undo our progress. Poverty increased, deepened and became more severe in 2021 after years of rapid improvements. These changing tides make it clear that we can not rest in our efforts to make B.C. a stronger and more equitable place to live.

LOOKING FORWARD TO TOGETHERBC 2024

From the very beginning government recognized that new challenges and new approaches to reducing poverty would emerge over time – and new targets for poverty reduction would have to be set as old ones were met. That’s why legislation requires the province to update its poverty reduction strategy over time.

Right now, government is working with partners to develop a new poverty reduction strategy in accordance with this requirement, to be released in 2024.

We're working with partners to assess progress towards targets, set out a plan for future targets, and to discuss how to best measure poverty and improved quality of life. Together we're identifying information gaps and discussing how they can be filled. For example, prices for the basics of life in First Nations, rural, and remote communities are often significantly higher than they are for people in larger communities, which creates a gap between people's lived reality and the province's market basket measure data. This gap is particularly significant for First Nations people living in communities on reserve.

We know Indigenous Peoples experience higher rates of poverty and other negative economic, social and health outcomes stemming from colonization. Addressing these ongoing harms is key to continuing to make progress on lowering the depth, breadth and prevalence of poverty in B.C. Work to address these and other priorities will be informed by consultation and cooperation with Indigenous partners in alignment with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and with the shared commitments in the 2022 Declaration Act Action Plan.



B.C.'s commitment to reconciliation and equity

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act) establishes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as the Province's framework for reconciliation, as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

In March 2022, the Province released the Declaration Act Action Plan (Action Plan), outlining 89 specific actions that government will take to become a better province for Indigenous Peoples. British Columbia is the first province to release an action plan dedicated to implementing the UN Declaration in Canada. The Action Plan reflects the priorities of Indigenous Peoples—First Nations, Métis and Inuit—living in B.C. The Declaration Act requires that government works with Indigenous Peoples on implementing the Action Plan, and that it reports out on implementation progress through an annual report. The Action Plan will be comprehensively updated with Indigenous partners within five years.

In October 2022, the Declaration Act Secretariat in the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation released the Interim Approach to Implement the Requirements of Section 3 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Interim Approach). The Interim Approach provides direction on best practices for the B.C. government to work with Indigenous Peoples on the development of provincial laws and policies that advance Indigenous rights.

CENTRING RECONCILIATION IN THE 2024 POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

Action 4.15 of the Action Plan commits the government to:

“Incorporate Indigenous experiences and knowledge of poverty and well-being into ongoing poverty reduction efforts and the 2024 Poverty Reduction Strategy. The strategy will recognize the ongoing impacts of colonialism and include Indigenous-identified actions and progress measures.”

In 2022, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) supported co-creation of engagement approaches for First Nations (including Modern Treaty Nations, Métis Peoples, Inuit Peoples and urban Indigenous communities) to inform the next poverty reduction strategy. This is in alignment with the Declaration Act and the Interim Approach.

SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR COMMUNITY PATHWAYS TO RECONCILIATION PROJECT

In 2022, SDPR provided \$9.6 million in grants to the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres to lead the development and implementation of the Community Pathways to Reconciliation Project over five years. This funding aims to address emerging opportunities to reduce poverty through:

- » Capacity building
- » Succession planning
- » Developing and implementing reconciliation capacity

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS LEGISLATION

In November 2022, Government passed the [Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Services Amendment Act](#). This legislation removes barriers for Indigenous Peoples

exercising jurisdiction over child and family services. This made British Columbia the first province in Canada to expressly recognize this inherent right within provincial legislation.

The amendments—the largest in more than 25 years—respect the inherent rights of Indigenous communities to provide their own child and family services, and to keep Indigenous children safely connected to their cultures and their communities, which is central to self-determining and resilient communities. The legislation was co-developed with Indigenous partners to align with the federal government’s An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. It brings provincial child and family service law into better alignment with the Declaration Act.

The new legislation will have an unparalleled positive impact on Indigenous children, youth and families, respecting and facilitating connections to communities, and resulting in healthier lifelong outcomes including reduced chances of adulthood experiences with poverty.

CLEAN COAST, CLEAN WATERS INITIATIVE

In 2022, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy provided an additional \$5 million in funding to the Clean Coast, Clean Waters Initiative. The funds aim to create environmental sustainability jobs in Indigenous communities and bring the total funding for this initiative to almost \$25 million since 2020.

The initiative is a partnership with coastal First Nations, local governments and non-profit organizations. It provides training and good-paying jobs to local people so they can work to help address marine debris and derelict vessels in coastal First Nation territories. These jobs have helped families and communities stabilize after years of lost tourism revenues due to COVID-19—while also addressing urgent environmental priorities.

COMMUNITY STORY: CLEAN COAST, CLEAN WATERS INITIATIVE

Between the summer months of July to September 2022 near the ancient village of Opitsaht—home to the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations Peoples—33 derelict vessels were removed from an ancient clam garden.

Coastal Restoration Society (CRS) centred the derelict vessel removals and shoreline cleanup around the needs of Indigenous partners. Through engagement and relationship building with First Nation hosts, the need to provide training and meaningful employment for local Indigenous community members was identified as a key factor. They also recommended the inclusion of knowledge holders, guardians, leadership, and community members in the implementation of the project.

The training for the derelict vessel removals began in mid July and ran for three weeks. There were 11 local Indigenous and one non-Indigenous participant completing the course and receiving their certification to work in the blue economy as restoration field technicians.

Gordon Robinson from the Tseshaht First Nation was one of CRS's candidates taking training and work opportunity.

He came across the program on a Facebook post on the Tseshaht First Nations page. Gordon was selected and went through the training at the North Island college in Port Alberni, B.C. and was happy to start his journey in a new field that interested him.

With the training, Gordon gained the knowledge and skills for his future position in the blue economy. Additionally, it was a new adventure, and it also gave him the opportunity to work outside of his Traditional Territory of the Tseshaht First Nation.

"The derelict vessel removal on the Opitsaht project was so much fun. I was able to take some of my old training and knowledge with power tools into the field and add value to

the team effort. I learned how to recycle various materials, and how what we do helps ecologically and environmentally to the surrounding areas and to the marine and wildlife," said Gordon.

Gordon was beyond happy to be able to work alongside some of his family, members of his community, and new friends. He was able to progress quickly and contribute to the success of the Clean Coast, Clean Waters projects.

"I am grateful for the opportunity and hope to continue my position wherever I am needed. Thank you very much to the Coastal Restoration Society and the wonderful team, I have been treated very well and am incredibly happy to be a part of this family."



Gordon Robinson
Crew Supervisor

INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEMS AND AGRICULTURE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Also in 2022, the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food provided \$1.14 million to Indigenous communities and businesses to increase food security by growing their farming and food-processing operations. Funding through the Indigenous Food Systems and Agriculture Partnership Program is being used for:

- » Agriculture
- » Food processing
- » Food systems planning, training and skills development
- » Technological adoption
- » Scaling up productivity and profitability
- » Climate-change adaptations

Funding is for Indigenous communities, businesses and organizations working to make food more accessible and affordable.

PATH FORWARD COMMUNITY FUND (ANNOUNCED IN 2022)

Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people experience disproportionate violence. Preventing violence and improving safety is foundational to health and well-being as well as economic stability.

The [Path Forward Community Fund](#) was established in April 2022 with initial funding of \$5.34 million. Managed by the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, this fund is a key part of B.C.'s work to end violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. It advances a top priority identified by Indigenous communities and individuals to end violence against Indigenous women: the need for safety planning and capacity building. This will help communities to create and implement their own culturally safe solutions.

Six priority action areas

2022 saw significant progress across the six priority action areas of TogetherBC.

HOUSING

The 2020 Homeless Cohort Update, released in 2022, provided additional, important information about unhoused people. In 2020:

- » Approximately 23,400 people were homeless in B.C.
- » 10,600 people moved out of homelessness, indicating significant progress in finding homes for people
- » 10,400 new people became homeless,³ indicating significant challenges in keeping people housed

Being unhoused comes with significant health risks – in October 2022, a BC Coroner's service report estimated 247 deaths among unhoused people in 2021, including an 84% increase in drug poisoning deaths over 2020.

In response to the housing crisis, government continued to work throughout 2022 to increase the supply and availability of housing, especially affordable housing, throughout B.C. – including working to create new housing with additional supports for people experiencing mental illness, substance use challenges and other barriers that make it difficult for people to find and keep a home.

³ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/affordable-and-social-housing/homelessness/homelessness-cohort>

In late 2022, Government introduced the 10-year \$7 billion Homes for B.C. Action Plan. This included:

- » **Introducing the Housing Supply Act, which will set housing targets for municipalities (to be brought into force mid-2023)**
- » **Amendments to the Strata Property Act to end all strata restrictions bylaws and limit age-restriction bylaws to 55+**
- » **Other measures aimed at increasing housing supply and housing affordability**

AFFORDABLE HOUSING THROUGH BC HOUSING

By the end of 2022, more than 32,000 new homes were complete, under construction or in development for people with a range of incomes, including low to moderate. This was done through the HousingHub, Building BC funds and other provincial investments.

In 2022, more new affordable housing for families, seniors and people with disabilities were announced in North Vancouver, Coquitlam, Richmond, Kamloops, Prince George, Oliver, Vernon, Saanich, Delta, Merritt, Keremeos, Gibsons and Telkwa.

MINIMUM SHELTER ALLOWANCE

Beginning in May 2022, government created a minimum shelter allowance to support unhoused people who receive income assistance, disability assistance and hardship assistance. This new policy recognizes that people who are unhoused face unique costs for sheltering and protecting themselves from the elements. This \$11 million a year investment will benefit around 12,000 single people, couples or families per month.

The shelter allowance is based on the family unit size. For example, a single individual is eligible for a minimum shelter allowance of \$75, while a couple is eligible for a minimum shelter allowance of \$150.

COMPLEX CARE HOUSING

In 2022, the Province announced \$164 million over three years to deliver the first phase of Complex Care Housing. The aim is to meet the needs of people with overlapping mental-health challenges, substance-use issues, trauma and acquired brain injuries. Many of these people have significant histories of poverty and marginalization, and were historically caught in a cycle of evictions, shelters, emergency rooms and jail cells.

Complex Care Housing supports some of B.C.'s most underserved people by providing a full suite of wraparound health, housing, social and cultural services to establish stability and break the cycle of homelessness. The program adds integrated health and social supports that serve people where they live. The Province has worked across the health, social and housing sectors and in collaboration with Indigenous partners and people with lived experience to design and implement initial sites in 2022. By providing people with the supports they need to stay housed, government is giving people with complex and intersecting challenges the opportunity to stabilize so they can heal and build safe, healthy lives.



COMMUNITY STORY: COMPLEX CARE HOUSING

"It was a privilege coming to this home, I like it a lot, and it's really awesome," said JT, an individual living in Complex Care in Interior Health region.

Complex Care housing works to address the needs of people who have overlapping mental health and substance use, and other supports in a home environment. These intensive services help people with the greatest needs get connected to housing, care and the supports they need to thrive.

"It's got the structure and gives me the routine that I am looking for in a home," he said. "I get three meals a day, I get to sleep every day in my own bedroom, and I get to shower every day, it's a very safe home where I get the supports and counselling, I need to stay healthy and in a safe environment."

JT came into the Complex Care home in Interior Health and this place has become a 'real' home for him since he came in through its doors.

With a supportive environment, including complex care workers, recreation therapists and cultural support workers, people like JT have a home where they can succeed.

"Watching these individuals struggle in other places in the community and then having them with us and removing all those barriers, makes a huge difference for us," said Kayla, Complex Care Worker in Interior Health region. "We provide care no matter where you are in your time of struggle, and it's nice to see people excel at their own pace and succeed in getting out of the cycle that they found themselves to begin with."

Complex care housing uses a harm reduction approach that keeps individuals safe and connects them with the support they need to thrive. The program also helps them in having a good future through support from recreation therapists and cultural support workers who help them with their recovery journeys.

"In my role, I support our participants to explore their wellness and their holistic health," said Katie, Recreational Therapist in Interior Health

region. "I do some assessments with them, and we come up with a plan and goals they would like to reach, and I help them every step of the way through their individual recovery journeys. Seeing them succeed is what keeps me coming back to help more people."

"We are working with partners to look at the needs for people in need of housing and medical care," said Penny, Cultural Support Worker in Interior Health region. "It is a great honour for me knowing I'm able to help people get the supports and help they need."

Every person counts and has potential to be an active contributing member of society. With the harm reduction approach, people in Complex Care Homes are safe, they receive the supports they need to get better, and the team of Complex Care Workers, Recreational Therapists and Cultural Support workers are helping them build a good future.

Programs like these provide an enhanced level of health and social supports that serves people where they live, for as long as they need it.

YOUTH TRANSITIONS: RENT SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

Young people who have been in government care are far more likely to experience homelessness or a mental-health crisis in their lives. The 2020/21 Report on Homeless Counts in B.C. found 36% of people who experience homelessness in BC have experiences with government care.⁴

Recognizing these unique vulnerabilities, government has been working to introduce a comprehensive system of supports for young people moving from government care to independence. As part of that, in October 2022, young adults transitioning into adulthood from government care became eligible to receive monthly housing support through the Ministry of Children and Family Development's new

⁴ <https://www.bchousing.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2020-21-BC-Homeless-Counts.pdf>

Rent Supplement Program for the first time. The program provides \$600-a-month rent supplements for up to two years. Young adults across B.C. received 799 rent supplements.

Budget 2022 investments aimed at supporting strong transitions for former youth in care are part of a [cross-government strategy to prevent homelessness](#) and keep people housed.

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Supports for families, children and youth continued to be a focus for the Province in 2022. Government worked to ensure more families in British Columbia were able to access the childcare they needed, provide the best possible start to their children's education and care for their children's health.

CHILDCAREBC NEW SPACES FUND

Through the ChildCareBC initiative, British Columbia continues to:

- » Fund thousands of high-quality, affordable childcare spaces
- » Build better facilities
- » Lower fees for families
- » Train more people to become early learning professionals

This initiative includes continuation of the New Spaces Fund, which provides funding to create new licensed childcare. This helps families access affordable, quality and inclusive childcare as a core service. As of December 31, 2022, 35 projects had been funded, adding 1,375 new childcare spaces. With more childcare spaces, more parents can enter or stay in the workforce and increase family income.

CHILDCARE FEE REDUCTION INITIATIVE

In 2022, the government improved the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI). This brought timely relief to families in need of childcare by opening over 76,000 childcare spaces with fee reductions of up to \$900 per

month, per child. By spending less money on childcare, families can reallocate much needed funds to providing other necessities.

As of December 2022, Government implemented three key improvements to the CCFRI:

- » Increased monthly savings for families by as much as \$550 per month—up to a maximum of savings of \$900 per eligible child in participating child care centres
- » Brought in limits on annual child care fee increases to protect families from unpredictable increases in their child care bills
- » Doubled the provider payment funding for participating group childcare providers and increased this payment by up to four times for family providers to support daily business costs, and mitigate the need to raise fees to cover costs

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES FOR YOUTH

We know that substance use challenges are one of the pathways that leads people into poverty. Intervening in these challenges early is one of the ways we can help keep people out of poverty and on the path to a healthy, happy future.

Budget 2022 included \$50.55 million over three years to expand youth substance use treatment and withdrawal management beds across the province. These new youth beds provide additional capacity to a full continuum of care that government is building for young people. They will be connected to culturally safe, youth-specific services, allowing youth to achieve their full potential.

AT HOME PROGRAM

Caring for a child with significant disabilities can come at a high cost for families. Recognizing this, in 2022, the Ministry of Children and Family Development announced a [\\$10 million funding increase](#) to medical equipment benefits under the At Home Program, the first increase in 20 years. This program helps to significantly lower the cost of medical equipment for B.C. families of children and youth with physical disabilities and other complex care needs.

REDUCING FOOD INSECURITY IN B.C.

Food insecurity disproportionately impacts people and families experiencing poverty. However, the rising cost of living (including food prices), climate events and supply chain challenges contribute to people and families being unable to access food. Responding effectively requires strong partnerships, coordination and collaboration across multiple sectors and jurisdictions.

Indigenous Peoples' relationship with the land and traditional food systems have been cultivated over millennia, and this relationship continues to this day. However, Indigenous food systems continue to be impacted by colonialism and colonial practices.

The Province's commitment to reconciliation through the Declaration Act and Action Plan includes a key outcome related to Indigenous food systems. This recognizes and supports the foundational and interconnected role these systems have in providing for cultural, social, environmental and economic well-being.

In 2022, the Province invested in food security and Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives including:

- ➔ **\$1.4 million to the United Way British Columbia to expand Regional Community Food Hubs and develop the Food Link app, which will help connect people, communities and organizations to food**
- ➔ **\$825,000 to Food Banks BC to provide rapid access to food for people affected by emergency events such as wildfires and floods**
- ➔ **\$130,000 for a Resilient North Research Project to better understand food security challenges in northern communities**
- ➔ **\$50,000 to the Support Network for Indigenous Women and Women of Colour to support the Get Your Groceries program, which increases access to healthy food for low-income and racialized women, and trans and Two Spirit individuals**
- ➔ **\$50,000 to Immigrant Link Centre Society to support their free food program From Pollution to Solution, which:**
 - ◇ **Redistributes food for people facing food insecurity**
 - ◇ **Keeps surplus food out of the landfill**
 - ◇ **Provides opportunities for newcomers to volunteer with the not-for-profit sector in British Columbia**
- ➔ **Launch of the Indigenous Food Systems and Agriculture Partnership Program, delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC (described above)**
- ➔ **\$500,000 to the United Way of B.C. to extend the Ministry's Food Infrastructure Grant Program to support rural, remote and Indigenous communities in B.C. to invest in food infrastructure that will build regional capacity to improve food access and availability**
- ➔ **Initiating the Canada-B.C. Flood Recovery for Food Security Program to support B.C. farmers who suffered extraordinary damages during devastating floods. Farmers were able to access to up to \$228 million in federal-provincial government support to help their farms return to production and support British Columbia's food security and agricultural communities in the years ahead.**



Access to education is important for breaking the cycle of poverty. It also empowers people to live their fullest lives and be part of a healthy society and economy in a way that is meaningful for them.

In 2022, the government continued building on previous investments in education. This meant more opportunities for British Columbians to pursue their aspirations through increased educational resources and supports.

STUDENT AND FAMILY AFFORDABILITY FUND

The Province helped students and their families who were struggling with rising costs of living due to global inflation. In August 2022, Government announced a one-time Student and Family Affordability Fund, with \$60 million allocated to school districts to help them:

- » Expand school food programs
- » Make sure students have the school supplies they need
- » Cover additional fees, so that students in need can take part in activities like field trips

This helps children to access all learning opportunities.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING PATHWAYS TO HIGH-PRIORITY CAREER PROGRAMS

The Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills allocated \$3.6 million to 11 public post-secondary institutions for the development and delivery of innovative pathways. These learning pathways integrate Adult Basic Education and English Language Learning with high-priority career programs, including Practical Nursing, Health Care Assistant, trades, technology and Early Childhood Education. This provides more opportunities for people to support themselves and their families.

INDIGENOUS-FOCUSED GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

In 2022, the Ministry of Education and

Child Care (ECC) conducted robust public engagement on the implementation of the new Indigenous-focused high school graduation requirement. In collaboration with the First Nations Education Steering Committee, ECC announced that all B.C. secondary students will be required to complete Indigenous-focused coursework before they graduate, starting in the 2023-24 school year. Feedback was gathered through an online public engagement and in-person engagement sessions.

The new Indigenous-focused course requirement is one of the actions identified in the Declaration Act Action Plan. It's part of a broader Indigenous-specific anti-racism and discrimination strategy for the K-12 system. Bringing Indigenous education into schools is an important way to move towards reconciliation and end disproportionate poverty experienced by Indigenous Peoples as a result of systemic injustices and discrimination that makes it harder for Indigenous people to advance their careers, access services and find good, affordable housing.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SUPPORTS

B.C. has advanced significant work to support early childhood education (ECE)—a crucial way to create strong foundation for children to thrive. Some examples in 2022 included:

- » The Ministry of Education and Child Care invested \$125,000 to expand the Just B4 early childhood education program from one to six school districts. This program supports children the year before they enter kindergarten.
- » Students in grades 11 and 12 were able to earn both high school and post-secondary credits toward careers in ECE with the introduction of 30 new dual-credit programs at school districts throughout B.C.
- » More than 1,215 successful applicants for the winter 2022 semester received funding toward their ECE training or upgrading. Approximately 1,380 more students have been notified they were successful in their application for summer 2022 semester bursaries. Bursaries are worth as much as \$4,000 - \$5,000 per semester.

Finding and maintaining meaningful employment can be a challenging and important step in moving out of poverty. In 2022, the government created job opportunities for more people in key sectors, and invested in employees through income supports to create a fairer labour market.

COVID-19 demonstrated how crucial paid sick leave is for keeping people healthy and reducing lost income from illness. New changes ensured that participation in the workforce was more equitable and put more money in people's pockets.

GRANTS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2022, the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation provided more than \$5 million to Indigenous organizations and local governments in rural communities throughout B.C. This includes communities affected by the cumulative impacts of COVID-19, floods, fires and extreme weather. The grants will fund eight projects in rural communities that support economies through tourism, community revitalization and infrastructure upgrades.

PAID SICK LEAVE

Effective January 1, 2022, the Employment Standards Act was amended to create a minimum entitlement to five days per year of employer-paid illness and injury leave for all eligible workers under Act, including part-time workers. This initiative ensures that people experiencing illness can afford to take time off, creating a fairer and healthier workforce.

MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

In 2022, the Province raised the minimum wage for the fifth time since 2018, from \$15.20 to \$15.65 per hour. The increase of 2.8 per cent reflected the government's commitment to tie minimum wage to inflation once it reached \$15.20 per hour. The 2.8 per cent increase was also applied to the alternate minimum rates under the Employment Standards Act for live-in

camp leaders, live-in home-support workers and resident caretakers.

MORE ECEs RECEIVE INCREASED WAGES

On April 1, 2022, the eligibility for wage enhancements expanded to ensure more ECEs will benefit. Previously, the \$4-an-hour wage enhancement program was only available to front-line ECEs working directly with children. Budget 2022 is providing nearly \$80 million over the next three years to expand this enhancement to all ECEs directly employed by licensed childcare programs, including Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development professionals with ECE certification. This initiative incentivises more participation in the ECE workforce, allowing for more childcare spaces to open to families.

YOUTH TRANSITIONS: NO-LIMIT EARNINGS EXEMPTION

In August 2022, as part of the development of Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE) services for young people leaving government care, the Ministry of Children and Family Development introduced the no-limit earnings exemption that allows young people leaving government care to pursue paid work without any risk of losing stability or access to supports.

This policy aims to increase stable employment outcomes, improve financial resilience and create the foundation for a strong transition to adulthood for young people who often face significant barriers to building strong, happy lives.

The no-limit earnings exemption means that employment income will no longer be a factor in determining financial need under youth transitions support programs. This means that a young adult's employment income (including self-employment and wage replacement programs such as Employment Insurance and Workers' Compensation Benefits) is now exempt when determining the level of funding received through youth transition support programs.

INCOME SUPPORTS

In the face of the COVID-19 recovery and rise of inflation through 2022, income supports are an important way that British Columbia is helping people meet their needs and those of their families.

HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE FLEEING ARMED CONFLICT ABROAD

In 2022, British Columbia welcomed many people and families fleeing violence in Ukraine. The Province worked to ensure that newcomers could thrive in their new home.

As of July 1, 2022, displaced Ukrainians who arrive in B.C. through the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) visa are eligible for 12 months of hardship assistance under the BC Employment and Assistance Program. They're also eligible for a monthly

earnings exemption applied to earned income. Eligibility for hardship assistance is based on need and can be as much as \$935 per month (single person), \$1,770 per month (family of four), \$1,358.50 per month (single person with a disability) and \$2,193.50 per month (family of four, in which one adult is a person with a disability).

B.C.'s PharmaCare program began providing 100 per cent coverage of one year of medications for Ukrainians arriving in B.C. through the CUAET. As well, a new policy for home and community care services ensures those who can't prove income have client rates waived.

Finally, the Ministry of Health implemented expedited Medical Services Plan coverage. As of October 2022, the Ministry of Health covers the costs of federal medical exams or diagnostic services.



COMMUNITY STORY: UKRAINIAN SUPPORTS

The scars of war upon a landscape can be repaired over time, but the scars on the psyche of people may take longer to identify and treat.

Ukrainian newcomers to the province have found plenty of support from the communities and service providers such as Fraser Works Co-operative that manages the WorkBC Employment Services in New Westminster.

John (name has been changed to protect privacy), displaced by war, came to Canada with his family. He connected with Fraser Works Co-operative through the Ukrainian Church that he attends in New Westminster. The congregation connected him to the co-operative to help him get the supports he needed to start his new life in Canada with his family.

While the people in the New Westminster community was helping him settling in this new chapter of his life, thoughts of home are never far from his mind.

"My country is suffering a lot, since the first day of the war," said John, Fraser Works Co-op client. "It is very bad, they have no access to water, heat, without anything and people are scared. It is difficult to connect with family and friends that are still there."

John was a flight attendant in Ukraine. When he came to Canada, it was difficult for him to get a job in his field since he lacked Canadian credentials, Canadian work experience and interview skills along with resume preparation.

This is where the amazing staff at the Fraser Works Co-op came in. Working with John, they gave him the coaching he needed. They provided him with skills assessments, employment planning, and mock interview preparation to help build his confidence.

The staff there also helped by getting him financial support that included bus tickets to go to and from interviews. With their Dress for Success initiative, they also provided him with

work clothes such as suits, dress pants, and shirts.

With the coaching and support from the case managers and the staff, John was able to secure a job as an employment counsellor. He is helping more people in the community and getting them the supports they need, the same ones that he benefited from.

"I am grateful for all the help the Fraser Works case manager gave me to get my career moving forward in Canada. He also boosted my confidence, I needed this to make a new start with my new life here and to in turn, be able to help more people find meaningful work in their new home here in British Columbia."

Fraser Works Co-op has a combination of professional, diverse, and resourceful staff that provide valuable support to its clients. It's this kind of backing that can make a difference in a client's new life, making it a successful start in a country far removed from the homeland they left behind.

BC AFFORDABILITY CREDIT

The BC Affordability Credit is one of the ways the Province helped low- and middle-income earners with cost-of-living challenges in 2022. The first BC Affordability Credit was paid in October 2022 to help with rising costs. This provides as much as \$164 per adult and \$41 per child, or as much as \$410 for a family with two children.

CLIMATE ACTION TAX CREDIT

In July 2022, the Climate Action Tax Credit amount increased for the 2022/23 benefit year from \$450 to \$500 for a family of four. This further helped to offset the cost of carbon taxes. The increase provided low- and moderate-income individuals and families in B.C. with up to an additional \$164 per adult and \$41 per child. In October 2022, the Province announced that this benefit would increase in July 2023.

BC FAMILY BENEFIT

The BC Family Benefit, originally called the Child Opportunity Benefit, provides a tax-free monthly payment to families with children under the age of 18. The program launched in October 2020 as a foundational element of TogetherBC. Because of the benefit, families may receive up to \$133.33 per month for their first child, \$83.33 per month for their second child, and \$66.67 per month for each additional child. In 2022, the Province announced that this benefit would increase in 2023.

ICBC REBATE

In 2022, the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) provided a one-time relief rebate totalling \$396 million to customers in response to high gas prices and other cost pressures. In addition, ICBC filed a rate application to the British Columbia Utilities Commission asking for no increase to basic insurance rates for two years.

SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Social supports helped create a more equitable society by meeting peoples' specific needs and ensuring they can be included and supported in their communities. The Province has taken a range of approaches to address these needs for people in poverty, which are often complex and far reaching. This includes:

- » Helping remote communities stay connected and grow their economies through better access to the internet
- » Improving access to needed medicine
- » Growing supports for individuals at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness

This network of social supports builds a foundation for people to live better lives.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION SPECIALISTS EXPANSION

Budget 2022 provided funding to more than double the number of Community Integration Specialists to 190.

Community Integration Specialists deliver in-person services to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, by connecting them with financial assistance and community resources. Community Integration Specialists help people connect with local community and government agencies, and fill gaps that cannot be met with ministry supports alone. Some of the services Community Integration Specialists provide include:

- » Expedited assistance applications
- » Making connections to shelter and health services
- » Coordinated case management
- » Homeless outreach
- » Responding to inquiries from community partners
- » Coordination of services

As well, Community Integration Specialists continue to expand partnerships with Aboriginal Friendship Centres to offer culturally appropriate services.



COMMUNITY STORY: COMMUNITY INTEGRATION SERVICES EXPANSION

The Community Integration Services program is a holistic, community-centred approach that supports underserved individuals, including those who struggle with mental health and substance use issues, as well as individuals experiencing homelessness. The Community Integration Specialists engage with people through direct and remote services in partnership with local community organizations.

“What do I do with this money? You are telling me that I can do whatever I want,” said Kelvin, Income Assistance recipient. “Can I go get a haircut?”

Kelvin was homeless for some time with no source of income. He did not know there were supports available for people struggling in life.

The Community Integration Specialist, working in the North/Kootenay region, met with him at his regular soup kitchen on Tuesday mornings just after the guests finish breakfast, holding his white board sign that said, “Ministry of Social Development, questions about Income Assistance or PWD.” That was when Kelvin approached him and was interested in knowing more about the services that were provided.

As it turns out, Kelvin had no income and was just getting by. He did some woodwork and leather work but could no longer afford his rent and was at risk of losing his home. He didn’t have the tools needed for his work and was homeless in a shelter for quite some time. He said he wanted to work but had a hard time holding down a steady job because he did not have any clothes or hygiene items.

The Community Integration Specialist worked with Kelvin to build his case and helped him navigate the processes and completed the applications that enabled Kelvin to receive Income Assistance for which he did not know he was eligible. Kelvin was in shock following his first cheque; he could not believe that he was eligible.

A couple of weeks later, he came back to the office and sought out his Community Integration Specialist, showing off his new haircut and shave – he looked like a million bucks. They connected for a bit, and Kelvin shared his journey since receiving his income assistance from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. He was doing so much better, and the Community Integration Specialist felt proud and happy he was able to help him.

RESPONSE TO PERIOD POVERTY AND IMPROVING MENSTRUAL EQUITY

Period poverty is the lack of access to menstrual products. It impacts the mental health and social inclusion of girls, women, non-binary people, Two-Spirit people, transgender men and boys, and other people who menstruate. The impacts of period poverty, like most other forms of poverty, disproportionately affect Indigenous Peoples, people living with disabilities, trans people and other people facing marginalization in society.

The Province has been supporting responses to address period poverty since 2019.

In March 2022, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction provided \$750,000 to United Way B.C. to establish a Period Poverty Task Force and to continue delivery of free period products to people who need them. The seven-member Task Force convened in November 2022 to examine key aspects of period poverty like stigma and shame around menstruation. A final report with recommendations for a sustainable response to end period poverty in B.C. is expected in March 2024.

In October 2022, the United Way B.C. called for proposals to conduct short-term pilot projects testing new methods of distributing free menstrual products, conduct studies to examine factors that contribute to period poverty, and look for ways to reduce the stigma and shame about menstruation. Results from pilot projects

will inform Task Force recommendations for a comprehensive and sustainable response to period poverty in B.C.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO INTERNET

The Governments of B.C. and Canada announced a partnership to invest up to \$830 million to support connectivity infrastructure projects that will improve access to high-speed internet for underserved rural communities and First Nations. The B.C. government's commitment to support expansion of high-speed internet services to all communities by 2027 will level the playing field for British Columbians and ensure every community has better access to jobs, education, training and health care. The application intake for this program began in summer 2022.

LOW-INCOME CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

In 2022, BC Hydro spent \$8 million on programs to help low-income customers save 7.5 gigawatt hours of electricity. As a result, participating customers saved a total of \$700,000 on their annual electricity bills. In 2022, 2,000 households went through the Energy Conservation Assistance Program and 13,000 households received an energy saving kit, helping people to keep their energy costs as low as possible.

BORROWING PROTECTIONS

On May 1, 2022, Government brought into force the High-Cost Credit Products Regulation to provide financially vulnerable British Columbians better borrowing protections. The new legislation requires licensing and regulation of high-cost credit products, which are loans and leases that exceed 32 per cent interest. This oversight will help ensure that businesses understand and comply with these new requirements. It will also make sure that consumers who may not be eligible for lower-cost credit are protected and can make informed choices when using high-cost alternative financial services.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC RECOVERY INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

In 2022, the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program provided \$100 million for infrastructure projects that will reduce poverty by:

- » Improving community economic resilience
- » Developing tourism infrastructure
- » Supporting unique heritage infrastructure
- » Supporting economic recovery for rural communities

Project recipients are local governments, First Nations and not-for-profit organizations.

NON-PROFIT RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY FUND

Non-profits are an important partner to poverty reduction in B.C. In 2022, the Province announced a \$34-million Non-Profit Recovery and Resiliency Fund to support non-profit organizations that have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Province invested \$30 million towards the initiative and Vancouver Foundation contributed an additional \$4 million. The fund is administered by the Vancouver Foundation and New Relationship Trust, an Indigenous-led funding organization, with support from United Way B.C.

This fund represents a new approach to granting, testing a trust-based granting approach with organizations that are smaller and often have less capacity to apply for and receive funding. Vancouver Foundation developed a process that required very little up-front input from applying organizations. Instead of a merit-based process, all applicants that meet eligibility requirements were entered into a lottery for a grant award. This aims to reduce the burden on organizations to apply for funding, as well as the competition between organizations providing valuable services and supports to people and families.

RESPONSE TO INFLATION

Government responded to the inflation crisis by implementing ways to increase the money in people's pockets and reduce cost. This was especially important to balance the decrease in COVID-19 relief benefits.

The government made sure students had the same opportunities to access education, regardless of income, through the Student and Affordability Fund. This fund provided \$60 million directly to school districts to help them expand school food programs, make sure students have the school supplies they need and cover any additional fees so that students in need can take part in activities such as field trips.

The government also worked to put money back in people's pockets through initiatives such as the BC Affordability Credit, which helped people through the challenges of inflation, and increases to the Climate Action Tax Credit.

Next Steps

B.C. has worked hard to improve public services, increase social supports and address the cost of living by:

- ➔ **Providing more homes for people**
- ➔ **Creating opportunities for families, children and youth**
- ➔ **Improving access to education**
- ➔ **Mitigating inequities in the labour market**
- ➔ **Supplementing income**
- ➔ **Establishing social supports**

Throughout these efforts, the Province has furthered the Declaration Act, working towards reconciliation.

In 2022, the Province also laid the groundwork for future change. Key initiatives developed in 2022 to be implemented in 2023 and beyond include:

- ➔ **The Housing Supply Act**
- ➔ **A further limit to allowable rent increases**
- ➔ **A BC Hydro bill credit**
- ➔ **Increases to the BC Family Benefit and BC Affordability Credit**

These initiatives continue and build on government's efforts to further increase access to housing, address the cost of living and reduce and respond to poverty.

In December 2022, the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction received a mandate to update TogetherBC, in alignment with requirements under the Poverty Reduction Strategy Act. While SDPR is the lead ministry, it convenes cross-government and cross-sector partners to respond to poverty in a whole-of-government-and-society approach.

In 2022, the ministry began laying the groundwork for engaging on the renewed strategy. Engagement with the Declaration Act Secretariat and use of the Interim Approach have been invaluable. They have helped to ensure government meets the intent and letter of the Declaration Act in alignment of laws, development of policy, and meaningful consultation and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

Appendix A: Minister’s Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee—2022

BACKGROUND

The Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee was formed with the release of TogetherBC in March 2019. The committee follows the work of the Minister’s Poverty Reduction Advisory Forum, which was in place from 2017 to 2019 to help guide the Province in the creation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Act and TogetherBC.

MEMBERSHIP

The Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee was appointed on March 18, 2019. It advises the Province on policy developments related to poverty reduction and prevention, as legislated in the Act. The 13-member committee includes advocates, Indigenous partners, stakeholders and people with lived experience of poverty. As of 2022, committee members included:

- » Zahra Esmail (Chair)
- » Mebrat Beyene
- » Cheryl Casimer
- » Murry Krause
- » Rosanna McGregor
- » Brad Mills
- » Adrienne Montani
- » Krishna Pendakur
- » Richard Schabler
- » Kirsten Sikora
- » Lissa Smith
- » Stephanie Smith
- » Caitlin Wright

PURPOSE

As required by the Act, the Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee is an independent committee appointed by the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.

DUTIES

Section 10 of the Act establishes the duties of the committee, which include:

- A. Advising the minister on matters related to poverty reduction and prevention and assess the progress of government actions taken to meet the legislated targets;**
- B. Advising the minister on consultations undertaken to develop and update the strategy; and**
- C. Providing independent commentary on the actions taken in the previous calendar year**

This commentary is included in the annual report. The Act also addresses the composition of the Committee. It requires that at least half the committee must be women, and that it must include representatives from nine key groups. Members are appointed for one, two, or three-year terms, to a maximum of six years.

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Appendix B: Market Basket Measure Rate Tables⁵

TABLE 1 - UPDATED MBM IMPACT ON THE POVERTY REDUCTION TARGETS

INCIDENCE OF POVERTY	2016 BASELINE (%)	2024 TARGET (%)	2021 ACTUAL (%)	% REDUCTION	% OF TARGET ACHIEVED
All persons	16.0	12.0	8.8	-45.0	-180.0
Persons under 18 years	17.4	8.7	7.9	-54.6	-109.2

TABLE 2 - POVERTY RATE TRENDS IN B.C., 2016 – 2021

INCIDENCE OF POVERTY	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
All persons	16.0	14.6	13.3	11.9	7.6	8.8
Persons under 18 years	17.4	13.4	11.1	7.3	5.0	7.9
Persons 18 to 64 years	17.4	16.3	15.2	14.8	9.5	9.5
Persons 65 years and over	9.1	9.7	8.5	6.4	3.7	7.0

⁵ Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0135-01 Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type

TABLE 3 - POVERTY RATE TRENDS IN CANADA, 2016 – 2021

INCIDENCE OF POVERTY	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
All persons	12.9	11.9	11.2	10.3	6.4	7.4
Persons under 18 years	13.9	11.7	10.6	9.4	4.7	6.4
Persons 18 to 64 years	14.0	13.4	12.8	11.8	7.8	8.2
Persons 65 years and over	7.1	6.1	6.0	5.7	3.1	5.6

TABLE 4 - POVERTY RATE TRENDS AND RANKINGS, BY PROVINCE (FOR ALL PERSONS)

ALL PERSONS	INCIDENCE (%)				RANKING (HIGHER IS BETTER)		
	2016	2020	2021	% CHANGE 2016-2021	2019	2020	2021
Canada	12.9	6.4	7.4	-42.6%
BC	16.0	7.6	8.8	-45.0%	2	2	2
NL	12.2	7.0	8.1	-33.6%	7	5	5
PEI	13.9	7.6	7.4	-46.8%	3	2	8
NS	16.4	7.7	8.6	-47.6%	1	1	4
NB	13.9	7.6	6.7	-51.8%	3	2	9
QC	11.0	4.8	5.2	-52.7%	9	10	10
ON	13.7	6.8	7.7	-43.8%	5	6	7
MB	12.4	6.8	8.8	-29.0%	6	6	2
SK	11.1	6.7	9.1	-18.0%	8	8	1
AB	10.1	5.5	7.8	-22.8%	10	9	6

TABLE 5 - POVERTY RATE TRENDS AND RANKINGS, BY PROVINCE (FOR CHILDREN)

CHILDREN	INCIDENCE (%)				RANKING (HIGHER IS BETTER)		
	2016	2020	2021	% CHANGE 2016-2021	2016	2019	2020
Canada	13.9	4.7	6.4	-54.0%
BC	17.4	5.0	7.9	-54.6%	3	8	4
NL	13.0	7.9	9.9	-23.8%	7	1	1
PEI	18.5	7.2	4.4	-76.2%	2	2	9
NS	19.9	5.5	6.1	-69.3%	1	7	8
NB	16.4	6.1	7.2	-56.1%	4	4	6
QC	10.9	2.3	3.0	-72.5%	9	10	10
ON	15.2	5.6	6.8	-55.3%	6	6	7
MB	15.5	6.0	9.5	-38.7%	5	5	2
SK	12.5	6.6	8.5	-32.0%	8	3	3
AB	10.8	4.2	7.5	-30.6%	10	9	5

Appendix C: Inventory of Government Initiatives on Poverty Reduction

This section includes the initiatives identified by B.C. ministries to support poverty reduction in 2022, or that are otherwise linked to efforts to improve affordability, inclusion, opportunity or reconciliation. Some are ongoing programs with updated impacts in 2022. Other initiatives were new or substantially enhanced in 2022.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

BC Farmers' Market Program – Expanded 2022

The BC Farmers' Market Expansion Program is delivered in partnership with the B.C. Association of Farmers' Markets. It aims to strengthen the ability of farmers' markets to expand local food/beverage sales and operate during emergencies.

Canada-B.C. Flood Recovery for Food Security Program – Started in 2022

Farmers in B.C. who suffered extraordinary damages during the devastating November 2022 floods were able to access to up to \$228 million in federal-provincial government support. The aim was to help their farms return to production and support British Columbia's food security and agricultural communities in the years ahead. Over \$62 million has been paid to farmers to date.

The Extreme Weather Preparedness for Agriculture Program – Started in 2022

This program will support as much as \$1.5 million in projects in 2022 to help farmers conduct risk assessments and make infrastructure upgrades on their farms.

Indigenous Food Systems and Agriculture Partnership Program – Started in 2022

In 2022, the ministry provided \$1.14 million to Indigenous communities and businesses in British Columbia wanting to increase food security through new opportunities to grow their farming and food-processing operations. Funding through the program can be used for agriculture, food processing and food systems planning, training and skills development, technological adoption, scaling up productivity and profitability and climate-change adaptations. Funding is aimed at First Nations and Indigenous communities, Indigenous businesses and Indigenous organizations.

MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Anti-Racism Community (ARC) Stewardship Program – Started in 2022

More people throughout B.C. received free training on how to help defuse racist incidents through this new pilot program. The train the trainer approach educates people leading anti-racism work in as many as 15 small communities. Successful applicants were selected in late 2022. They learned the skills needed to offer training on how bystanders can address racist incidents and facilitate community dialogues on racism and discrimination in their communities.

Anti-racism data legislation – Act adopted in 2022

Sixty community organizations received as much as \$25,000 to hold engagement sessions about how government should develop and implement anti-racism data legislation. Sessions finished in early 2022.

The legislation was informed by the thoughts of more than 13,000 British Columbians through engagement with Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities. Key stakeholders included:

- » **The BC Human Rights Commissioner**
- » **First Nations Leadership Council**
- » **The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres**
- » **Métis Nation B.C.**

The Anti-Racism Data Act, introduced on May 2, 2022, passed unanimously through the Legislative Assembly. It received royal assent on June 2, 2022.

In partnership with Indigenous Peoples and racialized communities, the Province is now beginning the work to collect intersectional demographic data, such as age, gender identity and ethnic origin. This will help break down barriers and better identify interconnected issues, such as economic status, employment and outcomes in health care.

Family justice services to Indigenous clients in community – Started in 2022

Family justice services are provided in Indigenous community organizations for Indigenous clients. This provides service to Indigenous clients in a more culturally safe environment and allows easier involvement of a support person. The Family Justice Services Division staff use space provided by the Indigenous community organization. This initiative will inform best practices for working with community organizations to offer services to Indigenous clients.

Informal trial pilot for Provincial Family Court (Kamloops) – Pilot in 2022

This pilot launched in May 2022 in Kamloops to test a process in which the trial judge can take a facilitative role to direct, control and manage the conduct of a trial. All parties and the judge must agree to the informal process. Benefits are anticipated for self-represented litigants, many of whom cannot afford to hire a lawyer. After sufficient volumes are reached, the pilot will be evaluated.

Provincially-funded Law Foundation legal clinics – New site in 2022

In 2022, in addition to the seven legal clinics the Province funded before, an eighth one—a child and youth legal clinic—became operational. The network of provincially-funded legal clinics, administered by the Law Foundation, includes a housing law, disability law, and immigration and refugee legal clinic, and four community law clinics.

The legal clinic model is achieved by adding a lawyer and support staff to existing Law Foundation advocacy programs. The Province provides \$250,000 annually to operate each clinic. The clinics provide free legal information, advice and representation to low-income individuals in locations where a need for poverty law and specialized services are identified.

Family Limited Representation Contracts – New funding in 2022

Budget 2022 committed to providing Legal Aid BC with stable, ongoing, funding for the Family Limited Representation Contract and to expand the financial eligibility for this service. The funding increases access to justice by increasing the number of clients who can access this service to help families in distress navigate the court system.

Society for Children and Youth – New funding in 2022

In 2022, the Province committed \$730,000 in annual funding to the Society for Children and Youth of BC (SCYBC) to meet the growing demand for legal services for children and youth.

SCYBC's Child and Youth Legal Centre provides information and referrals, summary advice and representation to children and youth across the Province in contested family law matters (consistent with the views of the child), child protection matters and other matters that affect them. The Child and Youth Legal Centre is the only program in B.C. delivering a full range of legal services to children and youth.

Judicial Review Procedure Act amendments – Completed in 2022

Amendments to the Judicial Review Procedure were brought into force on November 24, 2022. They ensure clarity with respect to judicial reviews of decisions made under Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act) agreements.

These amendments are part of Government's implementation of the Declaration Act, which created the means for Indigenous Peoples to fully participate in decisions that affect them, through decision-making agreements with the government. Supporting the implementation of decision-making agreements under the Declaration Act is an important part of the Province's commitment to lasting and meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

BC First Nations Justice Council and Province open new Indigenous Justice Centres – Commitments to expand made in 2022

The BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) has identified Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC) as a cornerstone of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy. IJCs provide wraparound services, primarily focusing on criminal law and child protection issues. BCFNJC operates three IJCs (Merritt, Prince George and Prince Rupert), and a virtual Indigenous Justice Centre for people who are not able to access an in-person centre.

In 2022, the Province announced funding a network of 15 IJCs, as described in the BC First Nations Justice Strategy. This included five IJCs in major urban centres (Kelowna, Nanaimo, Surrey, Vancouver and Victoria), which will increase access to culturally safe and relevant justice services for Indigenous peoples in B.C.

The Province has also funded the development of a pilot program, designed and led by the BCFNJC to support Indigenous Peoples with repeat interactions with the justice system. It operates out of the Prince George IJC and was a recommendation in the LeParé Butler report on repeat violent offending released in 2022.

MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Children and youth with support needs (CYSN) grants – New funding in 2022

In 2022, services to help children and youth with support needs—and their families—were boosted through \$7 million in grant funding to community-based service providers and advocacy organizations. These one-time grants are part of government's work to establish a new system of support that will allow better and more consistent access to information, expert intervention, mental health supports and therapies at new family connections centres being established throughout the province.

Allocating funding for children and youth with disabilities – New federal investment in 2022

As of January 2022, a Disability Supplement is provided to families who are caring for a child under a court-ordered out-of-care agreement, where children in this type of arrangement are approved for the Federal Disability Tax Credit and Child Disability Benefit. The Child Disability Benefit is a monthly benefit of \$248.75 for all children and youth in Canada under the age of 18 who are eligible for federal disability status. In addition to providing more financial supports to help keep families together, the application for the Federal Disability Benefit improves knowledge and access to other federal benefits, including the Registered Disability Savings Plan.

Youth Transitions: No-limit earnings exemption – New supports in 2022

In August 2022, the ministry introduced the no-limit earnings exemption for youth transitioning to adulthood from government care. This aims to:

- » Increase stable employment outcomes for young adults
- » Facilitate their attachment to the labour market
- » Increase their overall financial stability
- » Provide greater financial resilience

The no-limit earnings exemption means that employment income will no longer be a factor in determining financial need under youth transitions support programs. This means that a young adult's employment income, including self-employment opportunities and wage replacement programs (such as Employment Insurance and Workers' Compensation Benefits), are now exempt when determining the level of funding received through youth transition support programs.

Youth Transitions: Rent Supplement Program – New funding in 2022

In October 2022, young adults moving out of government care became eligible for the first time to receive monthly support through the ministry's new Rent Supplement Program. This program provides \$600-a-month rent supplements for up to two years. Young adults across the province received 799 rent supplements.

Young people who have been in government care are far more likely to experience homelessness or a mental-health crisis in their lives. Budget 2022 investments that support strong transitions for former youth in care are part of a cross-government strategy to prevent homelessness and keep people housed.

Youth Transitions: Increased supports, transition workers – New supports in 2022

In Fall 2022, the ministry began hiring youth transition workers to support youth and young adults transitioning to adulthood from government care. Transition workers assist youth, starting at age 14, to plan for their transition from care, and articulate and act on their goals. Youth transition workers also connect the youth and young adults to services and supports for a successful transition to adulthood and independence.

Youth Transitions: Increased supports, transition workers—New in 2022

In 2022, the Ministry of Children and Family Development began hiring youth transition workers to support youth and young adults transitioning to adulthood from government care. Transition workers assist youth, starting at age 14, to plan for their transition from care, articulate and action their goals, and connect the youth and young adults to services and supports for a successful transition to adulthood and independence.

Hiring began in fall 2022. The youth transition worker support is being implemented across the province in three phases between 2022 and 2024.

Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Services Amendment Act – Implemented in 2022

In November 2022, Government passed the Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Services Amendment Act, removing barriers for Indigenous Peoples exercising jurisdiction over child and family services. This made British Columbia the first province in Canada to expressly recognize this inherent right within provincial legislation.

The amendments, the largest in more than 25 years, respect the inherent rights of Indigenous communities to provide their own child and family services, and to keep Indigenous children safely connected to their cultures and their communities. The legislation was co-developed with Indigenous partners to align with the federal government’s “An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families.” It brings provincial child and family service law into better alignment with the Declaration Act.

Simpcw First Nation – Child, Family and Community Service Act – First co-created child welfare agreement signed in 2022

In April 2022, the ministry and Simpcw First Nation signed the first co-created child welfare community agreement (Tcwesétmentem) under the Child, Family and Community Service Act in B.C. This ensures the unique practices, customs, laws, language and traditions of Simpcw First Nation are integrated into child welfare decision making, protection and planning.

Specialized Homes and Support Services (SHSS) – Enhanced Out-of-Care program – Implementation began in 2022

In 2022, the ministry began implementing the Enhanced Out-of-Care program across the province. The program enables children and youth living with moderate to significant support needs to reside with extended family or people known to them. This aims to reduce the number of children and youth brought into care, or residing in foster or specialized homes.

This program improves the network of care through a procurement process for prequalified service providers. It works in close partnership with existing service providers to transition their services to new accountabilities and policies. Implementation also includes an outcomes-based performance management framework to support responsive oversight of the quality of care of children and youth.

At Home Program – New Funding in 2022

In 2022, the ministry announced a \$10 million funding increase to medical equipment benefits under the At Home Program, to help significantly lower the cost of medical equipment for B.C. families of children and youth with physical disabilities and other complex care needs. This was the first increase in this program in twenty years.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENS' SERVICES

Release of Gender and Sex Data Standard and Guidelines - Completed in 2022

The Gender and Sex Data Standard standardizes gender and sex terminology and recognizes non-binary genders and the reality of our gender diverse population.

The Standard will improve data quality and accuracy, so we can:

- » **Better understand our gender-diverse population**
- » **Support evidence-based decision making**
- » **Find opportunities to improve programs and services for gender diverse people in B.C.**

This will help government's poverty reduction efforts by supporting better gender-based analysis in program and policy development.

Development of the standards and guidelines were finalized in December 2022 and is currently being implemented.

Service BC Centres – New portal in 2022

For more than five years, Service BC and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) have used an integrated service model in 48 different communities around the province.

In 2022, B.C. launched a new, dedicated portal to provide information for Ukrainians who are moving to the province. Information included what to do when first arriving, getting settled in B.C. and how to access services such health care and financial assistance.

Service BC also launched a Mobile Outreach Program, which provides access to services in the community, such as:

- » **Driver's licence information and appointment booking**
- » **B.C. identification information (BC Services Card/ BC ID)**
- » **Medical Service Plan applications**
- » **Information on income and disability assistance**

Engaging with people – New engagements in 2022

The Government Digital Experience (GDx) worked with ministries to deliver 13 public engagements related to the development of equitable supports and recognition of all people in B.C. Examples of these engagement projects included:

- » **Children and Youth with Support Needs**
- » **Children, Family and Community Services Act reform**
- » **Youth Transitions**
- » **Building Accessibility Code**
- » **Supportive Housing Policy**
- » **Gig Worker**
- » **Indigenous-focused Graduation Requirement**

These engagement projects have supported the development and improvement of critical legislation, policy, programs and services.

GDx worked with SDPR to better understand the lived experience of people who access income and disability assistance. This research will inform updates to the Income and Disability Assistance legislation. This research included focus groups and workshops with:

- » **SDPR staff**
- » **Third party non-profit service providers**
- » **Community organizations**
- » **People who access income and disability assistance**

Multi-language Program – Started in 2022

Building on lessons learned during COVID-19, the Multi-language Program is a joint initiative between GDx and Government Communications and Public Engagement (GCPE). Its focus is to make government's communications more accessible and better meet the diverse needs of British Columbians.

The next focus will be on Arriving in B.C. It's intended to help newcomers to the province easily access the services government offers and give them the tools to contact government in the way that suits them best. The target audiences are primarily new immigrants, people moving to B.C. from other provinces, students and temporary foreign workers. In addition to English, the information will be available in French, Punjabi, and Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese. To help inform project planning, research is underway around the province, talking to immigrant groups, stakeholders, service providers and people who have newly arrived in B.C.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

Equity in Action Project – Expansion in 2022

This project provides equitable opportunities for Indigenous students to attend safe learning environments free from discrimination and racism.

The Project expanded to all 60 school districts in 2022 (representing involvement of 70,692 Indigenous students or 100 per cent of the Indigenous student population in 2021/22). It takes action to address systemic barriers impacting Indigenous student achievement.

External Credentials Program – New in 2022

Students in B.C. will now have new opportunities to earn credits for First Nations language and culture programs through the expansion of the External Credentials Program.

As of July 1, 2022, First Nations will be able to create and approve their language and cultural learning programs to be recognized by the ministry as external credentials that students can use toward graduating.

Student and Family Affordability Fund – One time funding in 2022

The Province helped students and their families who were struggling with rising costs of living due to global inflation.

In August 2022, Government announced a one-time Student and Family Affordability Fund. The fund allocated \$60 million to school districts to help them expand school food programs, make sure students have the school supplies they need, and cover any additional fees so that students in need can take part in activities such as field trips.

Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement – Engagement launched in 2022

In 2022, the ministry conducted robust public engagement on the implementation of the new Indigenous-focused high school graduation requirement.

In collaboration with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), the ministry announced that all B.C. secondary students will be required to complete Indigenous-focused coursework before they graduate, starting in the 2023-24 school year. Feedback was gathered through an online public engagement and in-person engagement sessions.

The new Indigenous-focused course requirement is one of the actions identified in the Declaration Act Action Plan, as part of a broader Indigenous-specific anti-racism and discrimination strategy for the K-12 system.

The BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA) – Ongoing

This agreement promotes systemic shifts and collective efforts to support improved educational outcomes of First Nation students living on reserve and attending public school in B.C.

The Government of Canada invested \$100 million over five years to support the BCTEA. The parties endorsed extending it until June 2025 to allow for additional time to complete the commitments.

In 2022, federal funding of up to \$3.8 million supported approximately 4,600 Indigenous learners living on reserve so they could have safe and effective transportation to and from school and to extracurricular activities. This was done through BCTEA Schedule G (Transportation for First Nations students attending B.C. public schools).

Legislative changes to support First Nations jurisdiction over education – Ongoing

Previously adopted legislative changes have allowed the Province to provide operational support for a new certification and regulation process for First Nations participating in jurisdiction over education.

As of July 1, 2022, four First Nations in B.C. have assumed jurisdiction over K-12 education on their land, and collectively established the First Nations Education Authority. Three additional First Nations in B.C. have completed the community approval process.

CommunityLINK – Ongoing

Provides funding to school districts for programs and services focused on vulnerable students.

Annually, about 25 per cent of CommunityLINK funding is spent on food programs. Government invested \$56.5 million in the 2022/23 school year.

StrongStart BC – Ongoing

StrongStart BC (SSBC) centres and outreach programs reduce young children's vulnerability and increase success in school throughout the early years and later in life.

In 2022/23, there were a total of 329 SSBC programs, serving approximately 22,000 children in 59 school districts. Government invested over \$10.5 million in the 2022/23 school year.

Childcare on school grounds – New capacity in 2022

Through Budget 2022, 56 of 60 school districts hired Early Learning Childcare Leads. These leads will continue to support expansion of programs like:

- » **Seamless Day Kindergarten (integrates before- and after-school care into the classroom, with instructional support from certified Early Childhood Educators)**
- » **JUST B4 (a half-day early childhood education program in schools for four-year-old children)**
- » **Integration Inquiry Project (seeks to explore a holistic approach to early learning and childcare on school grounds)**

Funding will also support ongoing expansion of childcare spaces on school grounds through New Spaces Funding.

Childcare Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI) – New supports in 2022

In 2022, the government improved the CCFRI to bring timely relief to families in need of childcare spaces. This involved opening over 76,000 childcare spaces with fee reductions of up to \$900 per month, per child.

As of December 2022, government implemented three key improvements to the CCFRI:

- » Increased monthly savings for families from a maximum of \$350 per child up to a maximum of \$900 per child through combined provincial and federal investments
- » An annual fee increase limit for facilities participating in the CCFRI based on three per cent of the regional median, with limited exceptions, to improve transparency and streamline the application process
- » Doubled the provider payment funding for participating group childcare providers and increased this payment by up to four times for family providers to support daily business costs

Early Learning and Childcare Agreement – Increased funding in 2022

In 2022, B.C. increased implemented funding for Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development. These enhanced investments are expected to serve an additional 1,500 children as of 2022.

Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Bursaries and Workforce Supports – New funding in 2022

More ECEs are furthering their education goals with financial support from the ECE Education Support Fund. Childcare centres may also benefit by having more qualified staff to offer high-quality childcare to parents throughout B.C.

Budget 2022 invested \$3.9 million over three years to add another 390 new ECE seats at public post-secondary institutions in B.C. More than 1,215 successful applicants for the winter 2022 semester received funding toward their ECE training or upgrading. Approximately 1,380 more students have been notified they were successful in their application for summer 2022 semester bursaries. Bursaries are worth as much as \$4,000 – \$5,000 per semester.

ECEs Increased Wages – New in 2022

On April 1, 2022, the eligibility for wage enhancements expanded, ensuring more ECEs will benefit.

Previously, the \$4-an-hour wage enhancement program was only available to frontline ECEs working directly with children. Budget 2022 is providing nearly \$80 million over the next three years to expand this enhancement to all ECEs directly employed by licensed childcare programs. This includes Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development professionals with ECE certification.

New Spaces Fund - Ongoing

Since 2018, the Province has invested \$2.7 billion in ChildCareBC. Part of this involves funding the creation of more than 31,800 new licensed childcare spaces through the New Spaces Fund and other space-creation programs. This includes 11,800 spaces that are open and more than 20,000 more spaces in development or construction. These funded spaces include more than 24,700 spaces for children ages 0-5, and more than 6,900 spaces for children ages 6-12.

As of December 31, 2022, 35 projects, representing 1,375 childcare spaces, have been funded through the New Spaces Fund in Budget 2022. More applications have been received and are under review.

MINISTRY OF ENERGY, MINES AND LOW CARBON INNOVATION

Skills Roadmap Project for Mining – Report complete in 2022

A cohesive roadmap for enhanced mine sector training was released in 2022. The goals of this project were to:

- » Support economic recovery
- » Address the impacts of automation, technology and advances in environmental and social governance
- » Support innovation in skills recognition and training delivery in rural and remote locations
- » Identify equity supports for recruiting and retaining women and Indigenous Peoples in the workforce

The CleanBC Better Homes and Better Building Program – New funding in 2022

This program offers specialized energy coaching and high-value rebates for heat pumps in Indigenous communities.

A \$10.9 million income-qualified program for low- and middle-income British Columbians was launched in February 2022. Between February and December 2022, the program provided 937 high-value incentives for energy efficiency, fuel switching, and health and safety upgrades.

Energy Affordability Working Group (EAWG) – Engagement and policy development in 2022

Cross-government ministries and partners are collaborating to identify ways to support customers in crisis, as well as to reduce ongoing energy costs for utility customers with low income to inform the update of TogetherBC in 2024.

In April 2022, the working group examined the extent and causes of energy poverty and included a review of programs offered in B.C. and other jurisdictions. In May and June 2022, EAWG undertook a series of engagement activities with Indigenous groups and low-income advocates.

Economic and Community Development Agreements – Ongoing

Government engaged with First Nations throughout B.C. on agreements in the sharing of direct mineral tax revenues on new mines and major mine expansions. These agreements are known as Economic and Community Development Agreements (ECDAs).

There are 53 signed ECDAs with 48 First Nations for 24 mines. Up to 37.5 per cent of incremental mineral tax is shared with First Nations for new mines and expansions, with \$80, 521, 900.82 shared in the 2022 fiscal year.

BC HYDRO

BC Hydro changes to customer disconnection policy – Policy change in 2022

- » BC Hydro policy is to not disconnect residential customers for non-payment during periods of extreme temperature. This includes a complete moratorium on non-payment disconnections in the North Interior and South Interior from November to March.
- » In response to increased temperatures in B.C., in 2022 BC Hydro aligned their high-temperature disconnection policy (35 degrees Celsius) with the Province's new Heat Alert and Response System.
- » In response to increasing wildfire and flooding events, BC Hydro implemented tariff changes to allow electricity charges to be waived for residential and small business customers under an Evacuation Order that has been in place for at least five days. BC Hydro also waives the customer's last bill, as well as the charge to establish a new electric service when they rebuild, if not covered by their insurance.
- » BC Hydro has also established processes with the SDPR to avoid security deposits and postpone disconnections for customers awaiting decisions on applications for support. BC Hydro further implemented tariff changes to allow another customer to act as a guarantor for a residential customer account as an alternative to providing a security deposit. BC Hydro has implemented changes that will delay disconnections where customers demonstrate a medical reason for requiring power.

Low-Income Conservation Programs – Ongoing

In 2022, BC Hydro spent approximately \$8 million on Low-Income Conservation Programs to help low-income customers save approximately 7.5 gigawatt hours of electricity. As a result, participating customers saved a total of \$700,000 on their annual electricity bills.

In 2022, approximately 2,000 households went through the Energy Conservation Assistance Program, and approximately 13,000 households received an energy saving kit.

BC ENERGY REGULATOR

Indigenous Training Opportunities – New in 2022

The BC Energy Regulator worked with the Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills to provide \$184,000 in 2022 to support 44 Indigenous students from over 23 communities from across the province in graduating from two specialized training programs:

- » **Natural Resource Training Group: Environmental Monitoring Technician Program**
- » **University of Northern BC: Indigenous Entrepreneurship Micro Credential course**

In addition, the regulator provided grants and awards totaling \$110,000 for Indigenous students and Indigenous research. Funding went to the University of Northern B.C., B.C. Institute of Technology and College of New Caledonia.

COLUMBIA BASIN TRUST

Affordable Housing program – New funding in 2022

This program supports the development of housing that is affordable and meets the specific needs of Columbia Basin communities. The Trust helps ensure that existing affordable housing (units) are maintained and are energy-efficient and comfortable for residents.

In 2022, the Trust provided capital and development support towards the creation of 316 new units through a \$1.5 million investment. It also supported the installation of solar photovoltaic arrays to 68 units of affordable housing to reduce utility costs and maintain affordability.

Thriving Families Grants – New in 2022

In 2022, these one-time grants supported 14 projects that build meaningful connections and create more livable communities for children, youth and families.

Seniors and Elders Activity Grants – New in 2022

In 2022, these one-time grants supported 25 capital projects that improve community-purpose buildings that are actively used for services, activities and events for seniors (such as seniors halls and/or centres), and projects that directly improve quality of life and social connections for seniors.

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy – New strategy and funding in 2022

- » CleanBC, the B.C. government's climate plan, is working to address the impact climate change has on poverty through the development of the [Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy](#). The strategy was released in June 2022, together with \$513 million in funding over three years for a broad range of initiatives.
- » As part of the work to better understand the social impacts of climate change, the Province released three reports:
 - ◇ [Climate Change, Intersectionality and GBA+ in British Columbia: Summary Report](#)
 - ◇ [Social Impacts of the Grand Forks Flood: A GBA+ Analysis of Climate Risk](#)
 - ◇ [Lived Experience of Extreme Heat in B.C.](#)
- » The Province conducted a series of equity engagements that will inform the development of future products and approaches, and released the B.C. [Extreme Heat Preparedness Guide](#), developed by the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness.
- » In collaboration with the Indigenous Climate Action Working Group and members of the First Nations Leadership Council Technical Working Group on Climate Change, the ministry is funding a \$2 million Indigenous Climate Resilience Capacity-building Pilot Project. The project is being led by First Nations Emergency Services Society and Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative Society to advance three focus areas: staff capacity, training and education, and peer mentorship.

Clean Coast, Clean Waters – New funding in 2022

In 2022, the ministry provided an additional \$5 million in funding to the Clean Coast, Clean Waters initiative to create environmental sustainability jobs in Indigenous communities. This brought the total funding for this initiative to almost \$25 million since 2020.

The initiative funds work to address marine debris and derelict vessels in coastal First Nation territories, in partnership with coastal First Nations, local governments, and non-profit organizations in British Columbia. In doing so, this initiative supports coastal communities as they recover from the COVID-19 economic downturn and loss of tourism.

CleanBC Plastics Action Fund – New funding in 2022

The CleanBC Plastics Action Fund supports the development of a circular economy in B.C. by funding innovative plastic waste reduction projects across the province.

The first phase of the fund distributed \$5 million to nine projects that supported 100 jobs, with selection criteria favouring projects that will directly impact women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and people of colour.

The second phase, with nearly \$10 million available for projects, was launched in 2022, with a new pilot funding stream specific for Indigenous-led projects that reduce plastic waste.

Organics Infrastructure Program (OIP) – New projects in 2022

The OIP is a federal-provincial grant program that supports the new organics processing infrastructure in B.C. Up to \$30 million will be invested in facilities in the province (\$10 million from the Province, \$10 million from the federal government and the remaining \$10 million from project proponents).

These funds support rural and remote communities, including investing in new green jobs.

Three new projects, including two for First Nations communities, were added to the program in fall 2022: Kwadacha Nation, Heiltsuk Tribal Council, and District of Kitimat.

Environmental Emergency Program-Recovery Pillar: Indigenous Funding Program – New in 2022

One-off Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique and Toxicity testing agreements for country foods (shellfish) help to ensure shellfish are safe for consumption after a marine or foreshore petroleum spill. This contributes to food security and reconciliation with Indigenous communities that are often struggling with poverty in remote communities.

Local Government Climate Action Program – New in 2022

The Local Government Climate Action Program (LGCAP), launched in 2022, will provide \$76 million over three years to support B.C. communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate impacts. It will provide annual funding to signatories of the Climate Action Charter and Modern Treaty Nations.

LGCAP collects data on equity and resilience through its annual survey report. This helps to better understand the distributional impacts of climate change, populations that are most vulnerable to climate risks, and what supports are needed to build local capacity and resilience.

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

BC Affordability Credit – New in 2022

This credit is one of the ways the Province helped people with 2022's cost-of-living challenges due to inflation. The first BC Affordability Credit was paid in October 2022 to help low- and middle-income earners with rising costs. This provides as much as \$164 per adult and \$41 per child, or as much as \$410 for a family with two children.

Climate Action Tax Credit – Increase in 2022

In July 2022, the Climate Action Tax Credit amount increased for the 2022/23 benefit year from \$450 to \$500 for a family of four. This further helped to offset the cost of carbon taxes. This increase provided low- and moderate-income individuals and families in B.C. with up to an additional \$164 per adult and \$41 per child.

Wage Transparency Measures – Engagement in 2022

The Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity led engagements with Indigenous partners, business associations, organized labour, legal advocates, municipalities, and the non-profit and public sectors in summer and fall 2022 to inform the new Pay Transparency Act.

The legislation will require employers to adopt more transparent pay practices to alleviate discrimination in pay and reduce the gender pay gap. Employers will be required to include pay ranges on job postings and refrain from behaviour that contributes to the gap, such as punishing employees who reveal their pay to their coworkers. Large and medium size employers would be required to publicly report their pay gap. This Act will come into force in 2023.

B.C.'s Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Action Plan – Engagement in 2022

The Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity, with support from the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, has a mandate commitment to develop an action plan to end GBV. This includes setting minimum standards for sexual assault response, more training for police, Crown counsel and justices, and establishing core funding for sexual assault centres.

B.C.'s multi-year, cross-sector, GBV Action Plan will build on initiatives underway and support the development of cross-government actions to prevent, address and respond to GBV.

To inform the development of this action plan, in March and April 2022, the Parliamentary Secretary engaged with:

- » **Representatives from the anti-violence sector**
- » **Indigenous partners**
- » **Advocates representing 2SLGBTQ+, Black and people of colour**
- » **Immigrants and newcomers**
- » **Sex workers**
- » **People with disabilities**
- » **Other subject-matter experts**

B.C. Family Benefit – Ongoing

The B.C. Family Benefit (formerly the Child Opportunity Benefit) provides a tax-free monthly payment to families with children under the age of 18. The program launched in October 2020 as a foundational element of TogetherBC.

In 2022, the Province announced that this benefit would increase in 2023.

BC Liquor Distribution Branch's Food Banks BC Campaign – Ongoing

Every year, the BC Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB) raises funds for Food Banks BC.

In 2022, the LDB held two campaigns through which BC Liquor Stores and BC Cannabis Stores collected funds on behalf of Food Banks BC. The funds are given to the food banks in the community where the funds were collected. Donations are distributed to Food Banks BC's 106-member food banks, as well as several non-member banks.

The two campaigns in 2022 (May 1 – July 18 and Nov. 12 – Dec. 31) raised a total of \$1.3 million.

MINISTRY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Provincial Perinatal Substance Use Program (PPSUP) – New funding in 2022

PPSUP is an ongoing program delivered through B.C. Women's Hospital. It aims to advance provincial capacity and services to improve health outcomes for pregnant and early parenting women who use substances and their infants.

Beginning in 2022, the Provincial Health Services Authority was allocated \$7.0 million in annual ongoing funding to continue the B.C. Women's Hospital's existing model with centralized PPSUP leadership and coordination.

Food Infrastructure Grant Program – New funding in 2022

The Food Infrastructure Grant Program supports rural, remote and Indigenous communities in B.C. to invest in food infrastructure that will build regional capacity to improve food access and availability.

The ministry provided the United Way of B.C. \$500,000 in 2022 to support ongoing services. A total of 116 communities have received grants to date, including 56 First Nations.

PharmaCare – New benefits in 2022

- » 100 per cent coverage of one year of medications for Ukrainians arriving in B.C. through the federal Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program
- » Expanded coverage or added 38 new drugs to the PharmaCare formulary in 2022

Home and Community Care (HCC) client rates for CUAET arrivals – New in 2022

In 2022, the ministry implemented a new policy for determining client rates for CUAET arrivals who can prove their CUAET status and are determined to need and be eligible to receive HCC services.

If the individual does not have income or is unable to provide any proof of their financial situation, then the client rate will be waived. In such cases, the individual will be assessed a \$0 client rate for their services for up to one year. The client rate will be recalculated if the individual gains income during that year or becomes able to provide proof of their financial situation.

The temporary policy supports CUAET arrivals who require HCC services but may not be able to afford the client rates.

Grants for Seniors – New in 2022

An age-friendly community is one that ensures senior residents live active, inclusive, socially engaged and independent lives.

To support seniors in leading active and independent lives, the ministry has awarded \$500,000 in grants for age-friendly assessments, planning and projects in 25 communities in B.C., including four Indigenous communities.

Accessing health benefits – Streamlined application launched 2022

The ministry launched the new the British Columbia Application for Health and Drug Coverage on September 22, 2022.

This new application form serves British Columbians better by combining the application for Medical Services Plan (MSP) with the applications for Fair Pharmacare and the Supplementary Benefits programs. Now individuals in B.C. can apply for all three programs using one form.

MSP coverage for individuals with maintained status – Enhanced coverage starting in 2022

The temporary COVID-19 policy expired on April 30, 2022. Effective May 1, 2022, eligible individuals residing in B.C. with maintained health coverage status while waiting for a subsequent work or study permit may be eligible for an initial six months of temporary coverage, with additional temporary coverage provided if applicable.

MSP coverage for individuals arriving under CUAET – New in 2022

Individuals from Ukraine who arrive in B.C. as Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or deemed residents (including those who arrived through CUAET) will have MSP coverage effective the first day of the month in which their application for MSP enrolment is submitted.

Effective October 1, 2022, individuals who are enrolled in MSP and who must complete a federal medical exam or diagnostic services should not receive a bill. Practitioners and diagnostic facilities can bill the ministry directly.

CUAET International Student Health Fee Remission Regulation – New in 2022

Individuals enrolled in MSP with a study permit issued by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada are billed an International Student Health Fee (ISHF) of \$75 a month to contribute to the cost of publicly funded health care.

Individuals fleeing the war in Ukraine and arriving under the federal CUAET temporary residence pathway do not hold official refugee or permanent resident status. However, they may not have the financial means to pay the ISHF and may be unable to work for some time. The CUAET International Student Health Fee Remission Regulation was enacted so that individuals enrolled in MSP with a CUAET study permit will not be required to pay the ISHF.

Health of Métis People – New Report in 2022

Mental health is a critical area of concern for Métis youth and adults in B.C., and for Métis females and non-binary youth in particular. Substance use is also an issue of note.

In February 2022, Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, along with the ministry, released the report *Taanishi Kiiya? Miiyayow Métis Saantii Pi Miyooayann Didaan BC* – the Métis Public Health Surveillance Program Baseline Report. The program identifies key health indicators and sets recommendations, goals and benchmarks to monitor and report on the health and wellness of Métis People over the next decade. The initiative will include releasing interim reports every three years to assess progress on achieving the 10-year health and wellness targets outlined in the report.

Progress Report on Racism in Health Care – Released in 2022

- » In 2022, the ministry released an annual progress report on implementation of the 24 recommendations identified in the report *In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care*. The report outlines the provincial government's steps to address Indigenous-specific racism in the provincial health care system.

BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program – Ongoing

New funding for the BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program will help improve access to healthy, locally grown food for lower-income British Columbians and people who are pregnant. It will also increase the number of Elders and seniors participating in the program.

The Province has provided the B.C. Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM) with approximately \$12 million to support the program, which provides coupons to purchase fresh, healthy, local food at B.C. farmers' markets. The program is run by community organizations provincewide.

The new funding supports an increase in the value of coupons from \$21 to \$27 per week and \$1 million per year to reach more seniors and elders.

In 2022, the program reached over 10,000 households (27,000 individuals within these participating households) in 96 communities. The Province was able to include 4,030 seniors (2,000 new) in the program. The program consistently demonstrates positive impacts on healthy eating behaviours, with 98 per cent of participants reporting increased fruit and vegetable consumption in 2022.

MINISTRY OF HOUSING

Maximum allowable rent increase – Started in 2022

B.C.'s maximum allowable rent increase amount for 2023 is set at two per cent—well below the prevailing rate of inflation. This increase took effect Jan. 1, 2023. If landlords choose to increase rent, they must provide a full three months' notice to tenants using the correct notice of rent increase form.

Housing Supply Act – Tabled and passed in 2022

The Housing Supply Act, passed in 2022, will enable the Province to set housing targets for specified municipalities in B.C. The ministry will provide leadership to municipalities so they can contribute to increased housing supply and expanded diversity of housing options to meet B.C.'s current and forecasted housing demand. The Province will work closely with municipalities to support the delivery of new supply across the housing continuum—from social and subsidized housing to rental housing and home ownership.

The program will be phased in, beginning in 10 municipalities in high-growth urban areas with low vacancy rates and high forecast housing demand.

Strengthening Enforcement – New funding in 2022

The ministry continues to strengthen its enforcement role to proactively address issues of potential contraventions of the Residential Tenancy Act.

In December 2022, government announced up to \$15.6 million over three years to the Residential Tenancy Branch to improve services and reduce delays.

Up to 50 staff will be hired to complete some much-needed improvements to ensure greater efficiencies, stream-lined processes, much greater service delivery and timely resolution of disputes requiring hearings at the Residential Tenancy Branch.

This includes doubling the size of the Compliance and Enforcement Unit, which will support expanded enforcement of Residential Tenancy Act contraventions.

Affordable housing through BC Housing – New sites in 2022

- » Through the HousingHub, Building BC funds and other provincial investments, more than 32,000 new homes are complete, under construction or in development for people with a range of incomes including low to moderate.
- » In 2022, new affordable housing for families, seniors, and people with disabilities were announced in North Vancouver, Coquitlam, Richmond, Kamloops, Prince George, Oliver, Vernon, Saanich, Delta, Merritt, Keremeos, Gibsons and Telkwa.

Indigenous Housing and Partnerships – New sites in 2022

- » In partnership with the Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George, the first of a four-phase housing development opened in March 2022 and provided 50 affordable rental homes for Indigenous Elders, seniors, families and individuals.
- » In partnership with Huu-ay-aht First Nations, the Province announced Oomiiqsu (Aboriginal Mother Centre), a new housing, support and childcare centre that will help Indigenous women and children, providing support services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to Indigenous mothers experiencing violence. The aim is to give families the best chance of staying together and help address systemic factors leading to the disproportionate number of Indigenous children in care.
- » In partnership with Keginow Native Housing Society, focused on serving low-income Indigenous individuals and families, construction of phase two began on the Sohkeyah development in Surrey. This site will provide 104 new affordable rental homes for Indigenous individuals, families and Elders.

BC Homeless Count – Renewed funding in 2022

In Budget 2022, the Province funded \$828,000 for the 2023 points-in-time counts. This includes funding to conduct counts in 20 communities, and compilation and reporting of all counts to get a provincial total.

Data from the 20 provincially funded counts will be combined with nine other counts (funded by the federal government and independent sources) to produce a provincial summary comprising 29 communities.

Preventing and Reducing Homelessness Integrated Data Project – New data in 2022

This multi-ministry initiative aims to better understand and measure homelessness in B.C. based on administrative data.

Findings from Phase One, linking data from BC Housing, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and the Ministry of Health, were released in 2022.

Homelessness Framework Engagement – New Funding in 2022

Budget 2022 funded \$633 million over three years to support individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Part of this action includes co-creating homelessness solutions with Indigenous Peoples and people with lived/living experiences of homelessness through engagement.

Budget 2022 actions and engagement is ongoing. It includes funding for external and Indigenous partner engagement on the Integrated Support Framework, and three-year funding for an Indigenous Advisory Committee and a Persons with Lived Experience Advisory Committee.

BC Rent Bank – Ongoing

- » Through BCRentBank.ca, the Province and Vancity work with municipalities to assess how best to expand services and establish rent banks that meet the unique needs of communities throughout B.C. Between Apr 1 and Dec 31, 2022:
 - ◇ 775 instances of financial assistance/households assisted
 - ◇ 1,576 people prevented from losing their housing
 - ◇ 2,910 supplemental services provided
 - ◇ \$931,418.68 in financial assistance distributed
- » Rent banks continue to play an instrumental role in helping vulnerable renters maintain housing during times of temporary crisis. The combination of loans and non-repayable grants has opened up opportunities for rent banks to assist more renters. Comparing year-to-date figures, the number of applications has increased by 20 per cent, and loans issued increased by 39 per cent.

Homelessness Community Action Grants – Ongoing

The Province has invested \$6 million to support strong, sustainable planning for local groups and organizations working on the front lines in B.C. communities through the Homelessness Community Action Grant program:

- » Municipalities and community organizations can apply for up to \$50,000 in funding for initiatives designed to prevent homelessness and better respond to the needs of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Grants are administered by the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC).
- » 197 projects have been approved with total funding to date totaling \$5.2 million. The average grant amount is \$27,547.
- » Grants have been awarded for projects in 46 communities and regions across B.C., including First Nations communities. Grants focusing on Indigenous Peoples comprise 21 per cent of the total number of grants and 25 per cent of total grant funding. Other grants include Indigenous people without designating them as a primary focus.
- » SPARC BC used interest earnings on the fund to purchase 13,500 smartphones, which have been distributed to homeless and other vulnerable people to provide needed support during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative is growing with an additional 10,000 smartphones planned for distribution to further improve digital health equity for individuals who are homeless and/or precariously housed, including increasing accessibility to health care supports and support during climate emergencies.

Community Housing Fund – Ongoing

This program is part of B.C.'s 10-year \$7 billion housing plan. It will provide close to \$1.9 billion over 10 years to build and operate 14,350 affordable new rental homes for seniors, families, and low-income and middle-income earners, with a particular focus on the “missing middle.”

The fund will provide approximately 14,350 rental homes for individuals, families, seniors, people with disabilities, those leaving transitional or supportive housing and Indigenous peoples throughout the province. New affordable homes projects may also provide access to mental health care, substance-use services, primary care, social services, childcare spaces and peer support. As of Dec. 31, 2022, more than 8,943 homes are open, under construction, in development, or initiated.

Women’s Transition Housing Fund – Ongoing

This program will provide \$734 million over 10 years to build 1,500 new supportive homes for women and children fleeing violence. This will include transition houses, safe homes, second-stage and long-term housing. As of Dec. 31, 2022, 898 units were completed, under construction, in development or initiated.

Supportive Housing Fund – Ongoing

This program will provide \$1.2 billion over 10 years to build and operate 3,800 units of supportive housing with 24/7 support services for those who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Housing providers selected provide support services which include such services as meal programs, life skills support, and assistance in accessing other assistance or benefits. As of December 31, 2022, 3,796 units were completed, under construction, in development or initiated. Of these, 1,812 units were completed.

Indigenous Housing Fund – Ongoing

This program will provide \$550 million over 10 years to build and operate 1,750 units of affordable rental housing to be owned and operated by non-profit providers serving low-income Indigenous families, seniors and persons with disabilities on- and off- reserve. As of Dec. 31, 2022, 1,516 homes were completed, under construction, in development or initiated as part of this program.

Rapid Response to Homelessness Initiative – Ongoing

As part of the Budget 2017 Update, the provincial government announced an investment of \$291 million to build 2,000 modular housing units for those who are experiencing homelessness. As of Dec. 31, 2022, 1,894 units are completed.

Emergency Shelter Program – Ongoing

Emergency shelters are temporary but immediate places to stay for anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. Types of shelters under the program include year-round, temporary and extreme weather winter shelters. These shelters reduce barriers to ensure the most vulnerable people are brought inside and connected to support services.

BC Housing funded more than 5,300 shelter spaces in 50 communities throughout the province over the 2022 winter season.

Homeless Prevention Program – Ongoing

This program assists at-risk groups facing homelessness by providing rent supplements and support services to help them access rental housing in the private (non-subsidized) market. BC Housing provides funding for the program, which is administered by community-based agencies and homeless outreach providers.

As of March 2022, 1,742 Homeless Prevention Program benefits were provided to British Columbians.

Rental Assistance Program – Ongoing

This program helps working families earning less than \$40,000 a year by providing cash assistance towards their monthly rent payments in the private market. As of March 31, 2022, the average monthly subsidy is \$323.

Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) – Ongoing

This program provides rent supplements in the private market to low-income seniors (aged 60+), including singles, couples and individuals sharing accommodation.

As of Dec. 31, 2022, 23,800 households received SAFER, with an average monthly subsidy of \$195. Despite paying less in subsidies, SAFER enrolment has increased steadily since 2016, due to aging demographics.

MINISTRY OF INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND RECONCILIATION

Increases to Forest Revenue Sharing – Enhanced in 2022

As of 2022/23, British Columbia more than doubled the forestry revenues available to First Nations as part of the work to co-develop a new forestry revenue-sharing model. This increase resulted in an additional \$63 million being available to First Nations.

The new revenue-sharing model will provide meaningful benefits to First Nations from forestry activities taking place on their territories and support the Poverty Reduction Strategy's guiding principle of reconciliation.

Community Well-being initiatives – Ongoing

These initiatives are community-based, socio-cultural reconciliation processes. Indigenous communities and the B.C. government work in partnership to identify priorities and implementation measures that advance self-determining, thriving Indigenous communities. These partnerships invest in areas such as:

- » Economic development
- » Cultural restoration
- » Human resource capacity building
- » Education
- » Health and family services
- » Institutional and infrastructure development

\$8,665,000 in funding was provided in 2022.

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres – Ongoing

The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) is a key provincial partner in providing supports and services to Indigenous people living off-reserve and/or in urban areas. The BCAAFC represents 25-member Friendship Centres with a combined total more than 1,000 employees.

Friendship Centres deliver programs and services that support health and wellness, education, employment, children and families, Elders and youth.

\$3.37 million has gone towards this program in fiscal year 2022.

MINISTRY OF JOBS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

Grants for Rural Development – New in 2022

In 2022, the ministry provided more than \$5 million to Indigenous organizations and local governments in rural communities throughout B.C. This included communities affected by the cumulative impacts of COVID-19, floods, fires and extreme weather.

The grants will fund eight projects in rural communities that support tourism, community revitalization and infrastructure upgrades.

British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) Centre of Excellence in First Nations Economic Development – New in 2022

As part of the StrongerBC Economic Plan, the province provided \$1.2 million in 2022 to the BCAFN to launch a Centre of Excellence in First Nations Economic Development. This initiative seeks to develop policy, build relationships and provide important tools and resources to advance First Nations' economic interests and priorities.

B.C. Knowledge Development Fund (BCKDF) – New funding in 2022

This fund is the primary capital investment mechanism in support of research facilities and equipment at B.C. post-secondary institutions. In 2022, the Government of B.C. awarded \$1,054,496 to four BCKDF projects that will lead the way to more effective mental-health treatments.

Rural Business and Community Recovery Initiative (RBCRI) – Enhanced Funding in 2022

This initiative was created to support rural communities in responding to the economic impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds are administered through the three regional economic trusts and are available to local governments, First Nations and not-for-profit organizations.

In Phase One, RBCRI provided \$4.5 million to the regional trusts to create programs that fund temporary advisors to help businesses and communities with their economic recovery efforts. In March 2022, an additional total funding amount of \$740,000 was provided to two of the three regional trusts to extend priority business advisors.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

Minimum wage increase – New in 2022

In 2022, the Province raised the minimum wage—for the fifth time since 2018—from \$15.20 to \$15.65 per hour. The increase of 2.8 per cent reflected the government's commitment to tie minimum wage to inflation once it reached \$15.20 per hour.

The 2.8 per cent increase also applied to the alternate minimum rates under the Employment Standards Act for live-in camp leaders, live-in home-support workers and resident caretakers.

Paid sick leave – Implemented in 2022

Effective Jan. 1, 2022, the Employment Standards Act was amended to create a minimum entitlement to five days per year of employer-paid illness and injury leave for all eligible workers under the Act. This includes part-time workers. This initiative ensures that people who are sick or injured can afford to take time off, creating a fairer and healthier workforce.

Workers' Compensation Act amendments – Implemented in 2022

In 2022, the Workers Compensation Act was amended to restore fairness for workers injured on the job and their families. The amendments bring B.C. in line with other provinces in providing benefits for injured workers. The amendments include:

- » Requiring interest to be paid on certain compensation benefits that are owed to a person for 180 or more days
- » Restoring the indexing of workers' compensation benefits to the full rate of annual percentage changes in the Canadian Consumer Price Index (CPI). WorkSafeBC will have the discretion to approve annual indexation above four per cent, if the percentage change in the CPI exceeds that amount. Since 2002, and until this change, cost-of-living increases for benefits were indexed to the rate of annual changes in the CPI minus one percentage point, to a maximum of four per cent.

Labour Relations – Completed in 2022

In 2022, B.C. re-established a single-step (card check) union certification process. Improving access to collective bargaining is intended to help protect workers who want more say about workplace safety, compensation and benefits.

Protections for app-based ride-hail and food delivery workers – Engagement in 2022

In October 2022, the Ministry of Labour initiated a public engagement to review and propose appropriate employment standards and other protections for people working for app-based ride-hail and food-delivery services. The engagement included workers, app-based companies, business associations, labour organizations, and academics and researchers.

This priority initiative is a key component of the government's broader approach to make progress on a precarious work sector strategy for B.C.

MINISTRY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Foundry Centres and Virtual Supports - New sites in 2022

The Province continues to support youth in British Columbia and their families to have faster, easier access to mental health and substance-use services and supports. This is done through the government's ongoing commitment to expand Foundry Centres and virtual supports.

In 2022:

- » Three new Foundry Centres opened (Comox Valley, Langley and Cariboo Chilcotin (Williams Lake))
- » The community locations for four new centres were announced (Fort St. John, Kamloops, Tri-Cities and Sunshine Coast)
- » Fourteen Foundry Centres were open across the Province and nine others were in development by the end of the year

In addition, another 23 centres will be implemented by 2025/26.

New and expanded youth substance use services – New programs announced in 2022

In December 2022, government announced 33 new and expanded youth substance-use programs across the continuum of care and across all health authority regions. Programs included:

- » School- and community-based prevention and early intervention resources
- » Community-based youth substance use and concurrent disorder services
- » Crisis intervention services
- » Wraparound youth substance use services to support the ongoing expansion of youth substance use bed-based services
- » System enablers, which will help create a more seamless system of care for youth substance use

New youth addiction treatment and withdrawal management spaces – New funding in 2022

Budget 2022 included \$50.55 million to support more youth substance-use treatment and withdrawal management beds across the province.

The new youth beds are part of the full continuum of care government is building for young people. This will be connected to culturally safe, youth-specific services in the community.

New and expanded substance use treatment and recovery services – New funding in 2022

Budget 2022 invests \$144.50 million over three years to continue the Province's historic investment in the development of a full spectrum system of substance-use treatment and recovery services.

To date, 106 of 195 new publicly funded treatment and recovery beds have been added to our system of care. This brings the total number of new publicly funded substance use beds to over 360 since 2017.

Decriminalization of possession of small amounts of illicit substances – Health Canada exemption granted in 2022

On May 31, 2022, Health Canada approved British Columbia's request for an exemption to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to remove criminal penalties for the possession of small amounts of illicit substances for personal use. Decriminalization will help reduce the fear and shame associated with substance use that prevents people from seeking care.

B.C. is the first province in Canada to seek an exemption from Health Canada under Section 56(1) of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Implementation begins in 2023.

Complex Care Housing – New funding in 2022

In 2022, the Province announced \$164 million over three years to deliver the first phase of Complex Care Housing. This new housing model addresses the needs of people with overlapping mental-health challenges, substance-use issues, and/or histories of trauma and acquired brain injuries. Many of these individuals also experience other unmet needs, have significant histories of poverty and marginalization, and were historically caught in a cycle of evictions, shelters, emergency rooms and jail cells.

Complex Care Housing supports some of B.C.'s most underserved people by providing a full suite of wraparound health, housing, social and cultural services. This will help establish stability and connection and break the cycle of homelessness. The program aims to enhance the level of integrated health and social supports that serve people where they live.

The Province has worked across the health, social and housing sectors and in collaboration with Indigenous partners and people with lived experience to design and implement initial sites in 2022.

Tripartite Partnership to Improve Mental Health and Wellness Services and Achieve Progress on the Determinants of Health and Wellness (Tripartite MOU) – Evaluated and extended in 2022

Supported by an investment of \$30 million, this Tripartite MOU is between the First Nations Health Council, the First Nations Health Authority as a supporter, the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada. It provides First Nations with flexible funding to fill service gaps across a continuum of care and to integrate clinical and traditional approaches to mental health and wellness.

In 2022, the Tripartite MOU was extended to Oct. 1, 2023. This allows continued implementation of Tripartite MOU initiatives under existing funding commitments.

An [Evaluation Report](#) of the MOU was completed in December 2022.

Access to prescribed safer supply – Ongoing

People have been accessing prescribed safer supply since March 2020, when the Province introduced the first phase of the program. In December 2022, approximately 4,535 people were prescribed safer supply opioid medications.

Building on previous commitments, government invested \$26.6 million over three years to support health authorities to implement prescribed safe supply. Funding has supported:

- » Expanding existing and creating new programs
- » Increasing staffing capacity
- » Robust monitoring and evaluation of the policy's implementation

Bed-based expansion grants – Ongoing

The Province invested \$13.5 million over three years to increase the number of publicly-funded beds for people struggling with substance use challenges. This will improve access to quality and evidence-informed treatment and recovery services.

The grant funding is being directed through the Canadian Mental Health Association, B.C. Division. In its first year (April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022), the grant resulted in the addition of 105 new publicly-funded beds across 14 organizations, serving 484 clients.

MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Public library COVID-19 relief and recovery initiatives – Started in 2022

The Ministry provided \$8 million in March 2022 to be distributed among 71 public libraries and library sector organizations. People will see improvements at their local public libraries, including expanded digital collections, upgraded, barrier-free spaces, enhanced programming, and improved access to wi-fi and computers.

Strengthening Communities' Services Program – New intake in 2022

Local governments and Treaty First Nations were able to apply for \$100 million in grants to address the impacts of homelessness, support people and strengthen communities' health and safety. This builds on the Province's commitment to help people and communities through the pandemic. The program is being administered by the Union of B.C. Municipalities.

In 2022, the program's second intake saw more than \$21 million invested in 46 communities. This funding supports initiatives such as outreach, mental health supports and expanded temporary shelters.

Refugee Readiness Fund – Expanded in 2022

The original \$2 million one-time fund started in 2021 to ensure that B.C. communities were ready to welcome and respond to the needs of refugees from Afghanistan resettling in the province.

The funding was expanded in 2022 with an additional \$2 million to support displaced Ukrainians and community cultural organizations that play a key role in supporting refugees and displaced populations in the province.

Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program – Ongoing

The Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program provided \$100 million in one-time infrastructure grants for projects across the province that are "ready to go" in 2022. These projects will:

- » Improve community economic resilience
- » Develop tourism infrastructure
- » Support unique heritage infrastructure
- » Support economic recovery for rural communities

Grant recipients are local governments, First Nations and not-for-profit organizations.

Community Literacy: Literacy Outreach Coordination - Ongoing

The ministry awards \$2.185 million annually to Decoda's Literacy Outreach Program. Decoda supports 101 Literacy Outreach Coordinators who provide literacy programming support to 400 communities in B.C. In 2022, 425 new community literacy initiatives were developed.

MINISTRY OF POST SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FUTURE SKILLS (ADVANCED EDUCATION OF FUTURE SKILLS)

Indigenous Skills Training and Education (ISTE) programs – Enhanced Funding in 2022

These programs provide funding to Indigenous communities to increase access to skills training and education for Indigenous people in the community. This helps to ensure Indigenous people have the skills needed to respond to emerging labour market and economic development opportunities.

In 2022/23, the ISTE supported 178 Indigenous communities through 68 projects. The budget for the ISTE programs in 2022/23 was \$24 million. An additional \$15 million in StrongerBC funding was available to support Indigenous communities with their economic recovery from impacts of the pandemic.

Funding to expand co-op and Work-Integrated Learning programs – Implemented in 2022

Government invested \$5.5 million in one-time funding to support 45 projects intended to offset the loss of work-integrated learning placements due to COVID-19 and help students to acquire effective work experience.

These projects were implemented over the course of 2022, supporting over 4,200 work-integrated learning placements of various types across the province.

Adult Upgrading Grant (AUG) – New funding in 2022

This grant helps eligible low-income students in Adult Basic Education, Adult Special Education and English Language Learning to complete or upgrade their education. It helps by paying the cost of books, transportation, technology, mandatory fees and unsubsidized childcare.

Government invested \$3.6 million in the Adult Upgrading Grant in 2022.

Adult Basic Education/English Language Learning Pathways to High-Priority Career Programs – New In 2022

The ministry allocated \$3.6 million in one-time funding to 11 public post-secondary institutions for the development and delivery of innovative pathways that integrate Adult Basic Education and English Language Learning with high-priority career programs. These programs can include Practical Nursing, Health Care Assistant, trades, technology and Early Childhood Education.

Community Adult Literacy Program (CALP) – Enhanced funding in 2022

This program supports community-based Indigenous, adult and family literacy programs that help British Columbians gain skills in reading, writing, math and digital literacy.

In April 2022, the annual CALP funding was increased to \$3.4 million (from \$2.4 million the previous year).

Aboriginal Service Plans – New funding in 2022

Government funds Aboriginal Service Plans at public post-secondary institutions. The aim is to foster partnerships between institutions and local Indigenous communities.

Government invested \$6.4 million in 2022.

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SOLICITOR GENERAL (PSSG)

Crime Victim Assistance Program – Funded provided in 2022

In 2022, the ministry provided approximately \$15.4 million in benefits for counselling and other supports to eligible victims, immediate family members and some witnesses. The aim is to help understand and address the effects of violent crime, which may increase an individual's risk of falling into poverty or continuing to experience poverty.

Path Forward Community Fund – Announced in 2022

Established in April 2022 with initial funding of \$5.34 million, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres is managing the [Path Forward Community Fund](#). The fund is a key part of B.C.'s work to end violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ people.

The fund advances a top priority identified by Indigenous communities and individuals to end violence against Indigenous women: the need for safety planning and capacity building so communities can create and implement their own culturally safe solutions.

Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) rebate – One-time funding in 2022

In 2022, ICBC provided a \$396-million one-time relief rebate to customers in response to high gas prices and other cost pressures.

ICBC also filed a rate application to the British Columbia Utilities Commission, asking for no increase to Basic insurance rates for two years.

Borrowing protections – New in 2022

On May 1, 2022, the Government brought into force the High-Cost Credit Products Regulation to provide financially vulnerable British Columbians better borrowing protections. The new legislation requires licensing and regulation of high-cost credit products (loans and leases that exceed 32 per cent interest).

This oversight will help ensure that businesses understand and comply with these new requirements. It will protect consumers who may not be eligible for lower-cost credit, so they can make informed choices when using high-cost alternative financial services.

Victim Service and Violence Against Women Programs - Ongoing

The ministry provides over \$44 million annually to support over 400 [victim service and violence against women programs](#) across the province. This includes:

- » Over 160 police-based and community-based victim service programs
- » 239 Violence Against Women Counselling and Outreach programs
- » Nine Domestic Violence Units

These programs provide counselling, court support, outreach and crisis support for women and children who experience domestic violence, sexual assault and other crimes.

In 2022, 46,719 new clients received support through the ministry's more than 160 contracted police-based and community-based victim service programs.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION

Inclusive Housing Initiative – Grants awarded in 2022

- » Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) provided \$35,000 in sponsorship of Inclusive Housing sessions at the Housing Central Conference and Regional Education, Networking & Tradeshow (RENT) Conferences to raise awareness for the need for inclusive housing outside of the community living sector
- » CLBC engaged key community partners to develop a more robust plan as part of the Re-imagining Community Inclusion initiative. The plan includes:
 - ◇ A focus on cultural safety for Indigenous people
 - ◇ Taking advantage of housing initiatives planned or underway by including people with developmental disabilities in them
 - ◇ Exploring options to close the gap between current income and affordable housing rates
- » CLBC implemented a project to more accurately forecast the future housing and service needs of CLBC-eligible individuals
- » CLBC entered a contract with the Home Sharing Support Society of BC, providing it with \$200,000 to enhance and support the sustainability of home sharing
- » In 2022, CLBC provided two- to three-year grants totalling \$1.86 million

Community Inclusion Innovation Fund – Funding allocated in 2022

In December 2021, CLBC launched this one-time fund, inviting applications for \$5,000 – \$100,000 grants to support people to be better included in their communities.

The goal of the fund is to invest in creative initiatives across B.C. that:

- » Build on lessons learned through COVID-19
- » Test new approaches to achieve inclusion
- » Innovate service delivery
- » Support the rollout of CLBC’s new Learning, Inclusion, Friendship and Employment (L.I.F.E.)-based service

Nineteen organizations received funding.

STEPS Forward – Expansion in 2022

STEPS Forward’s BC Initiative for Inclusive Post-Secondary Education provides inclusion support for students with developmental disabilities to access post-secondary education. CLBC has supported this initiative since 2014/15 and continues to expand this service across the province.

In fiscal year 2022/23, \$1,047,573 was provided to support 42 individuals at nine campuses in all five CLBC regions across B.C.

Supporting Leadership of People with Developmental Disabilities – New funding in 2022

Through this initiative, CLBC is increasing the number of individuals with developmental disabilities in leadership roles. This ensures that people with lived experience are involved in decision-making processes that affect them.

During 2021 and 2022 CLBC distributed a number of grants to support the leadership of individuals with developmental disabilities. An additional \$65,000 was provided in 2022.

Other employment initiatives – New funding in 2022

In 2022, CLBC provided two- to three-year employment grants (totalling \$1.76 million) to a number of organizations to increase capacity and promote employment:

- » Inclusion Langley, for its In the Zone employment initiative
- » Inclusion BC, for a Youth Employment Summit
- » BC Employment Network (BCEN) and Indigenous Community for Leadership and Development, for a project on Culturally Safe Employment Services
- » BCEN, for Employment Coordinator Training
- » Hazelton Community Services, for its More Than Learning, Inclusion, Friendship, and Employment (L.I.F.E.) project
- » Inclusion BC, for Employer Development

L.I.F.E. services – Ongoing

The L.I.F.E. service is now being expanded across the province, as service providers begin to shift their focus away from managing the impact of COVID-19.

In addition to employment, participants are reporting positive outcomes such as improved learning, inclusion and friendships.

CLBC undertook procurement for new service providers in 2022. It continues to procure additional services, aiming to establish L.I.F.E. services in every community. Funding in 2022 was approximately \$2.7 million.

Grant to North West Industries Association – New in 2022

The ministry provided more than \$600,000 to North West Industries Association to train people to enter the industrial sewing training program (three intakes).

Community and Employer Partnerships (CEP) projects – Enhanced funding in 2022

- » As many as 36 eligible people will get occupational and employability skills training over three intakes to prepare them for jobs as veterinary assistants on the Lower Mainland. This is a new CEP project from the Government of British Columbia. Participant recruitment is focused on immigrants.
- » The Province provided funding of more than \$340,000 to the Mountain Transport Institute, to deliver four intakes of its professional Class 1 driver-training program in the West Kootenays.
- » The Province provided funding of more than \$550,000 to Semiahmoo House Society, to deliver two intakes of its Food Service Assistant Certificate Project for People with Disabilities training program.
- » The Province provided funding of more than \$290,000 to Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, through the CEP fund to provide training.

Accessibility Professional Network – Expanded in 2022

The Province provided \$2.5 million for grants, which will also be used to expand the Accessibility Professional Network across the province and increase use of the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification rating.

Accessibility grants - New Round of Funding in 2022

In May 2021, as part of the Province's ongoing commitment to increasing accessibility and improving community inclusion, government announced funding for community-based accessibility projects.

Fifteen applicants have been selected to receive grants ranging from \$10,500 to \$40,000, depending on the size and scope of the project. The 2022 call for proposals closed in October 2022.

Accessible B.C. Act – Implementation in 2022

- » The Accessible BC Act establishes a legal framework for government to work with people with disabilities and the broader community to address barriers to full and equal participation. The legislation allows for the development of accessibility standards in a range of different areas. In 2022, Government complied with requirements of Part 3 of the Accessible B.C. Act by:
 - ◇ Establishing the Provincial Accessibility Committee
 - ◇ Releasing AccessibleBC, government's three-year accessibility plan
 - ◇ Establishing a new Accessibility Feedback Tool so that members of the public can provide feedback about the accessibility of government programs and services
- » Government passed the Accessible B.C. Regulation, which requires more than 750 public sector organizations around B.C. to establish their own accessibility committees, plans and feedback tools
- » Government initiated the development of accessibility standards in the areas of employment and customer service by appointing two new technical committees

BC Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Community Services Network – Expansion in 2022

A range of community services for people with disabilities throughout B.C. will be expanded, thanks to a provincial grant of \$3 million over three years.

With the renewed funding, the BC Paraplegic Foundation will support the BC SCI Community Services Network, so it can continue to focus on initiatives to improve inclusion for people with disabilities.

Immigrant Link Centre Society – New funding in 2022

Immigrant Link Centre Society received \$50,000 to support their free food program, From Pollution to Solution. The program redistributes food for people facing food insecurity, while keeping surplus food out of the landfill. It also provides opportunities for newcomers to volunteer with the not-for-profit sector in British Columbia.

Support Network for Indigenous Women and Women of Colour – New funding in 2022

The non-profit organization Support Network for Indigenous Women and Women of Colour was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Province.

Funding supported a project called Get Your Groceries, which increases access to healthy food for low-income and racialized women, trans and Two-Spirit individuals.

Victoria Foundation’s Food Security – Provincial Initiatives Fund – New funding in 2022

The Victoria Foundation previously received \$3 million from the Province to develop a Food Security Provincial Initiatives Fund. Of that funding, approximately \$1.9 million went to the Mustard Seed Food Bank, to support a food distribution centre for southern Vancouver Island. The remaining funding was disbursed in grants that benefitted thousands of people across the province. This included several grants to support Indigenous food sovereignty in First Nations communities.

In 2022, Victoria Foundation received an additional \$800,000 to support the program.

Food Security Funding for Food Banks BC (FBBC) – New Funding in 2022

In 2022, FBBC received:

- » An additional \$825,000 to provide rapid access to food for people affected by emergency events, such as wildfires and floods
- » \$130,000 towards a Resilient North Research Project, to develop a greater understanding of the unique food-security challenges in northern communities

United Way B.C. Regional Community Food Hubs – Expansion in 2022

In 2022, United Way B.C. received \$1.4 million in addition to previous funding:

- » \$1 million to support expansion of its Regional Community Food Hub operations
- » \$400,000 to develop an app that will make it easier for communities to request food as they need it.

The regional food hubs operate on a “hub and spoke” model. This includes organizations providing food support and those providing wraparound service support.

Partnerships include community partners such as non-profits, local businesses, local agriculture, the private sector, school districts, municipalities and more. They all work together to strengthen the vital connections needed to put food on the tables of all residents of B.C.

Moving Supplement – New in 2022

In July 2022, policy updates were made to the moving, transportation and living costs supplement. This clarifies the supplement is available to those experiencing homelessness.

This clarification reduces barriers for clients and assists them with moving costs during their transition from homelessness to housing. This benefits approximately 1,200 cases per month, with an estimated annual cost of \$1 million.

Hardship Assistance for People Fleeing Armed Conflict Abroad – New in 2022

In 2022, British Columbia welcomed many individuals and families fleeing violence in Ukraine. The Province worked to ensure that newcomers could thrive in their new home.

As of July 1, 2022, displaced Ukrainians who arrived in B.C. through the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) visa, and others who arrived in B.C. in similar circumstances, were eligible for 12 months of hardship assistance under the BC Employment and Assistance Program. They are also eligible for a monthly earnings exemption applied to earned income.

Eligibility for 2022 hardship assistance was based on need. It could be as much as \$935 per month (single person), \$1,770 per month (family of four), \$1,358.50 per month (single person with a disability) and \$2,193.50 per month (family of four, one adult is a person with a disability).

Minimum Shelter Allowance – New in 2022

Effective May 2022, government began investing \$11 million a year to create a minimum shelter allowance for people who receive income assistance, disability assistance and hardship assistance.

A minimum shelter allowance is now available to people, regardless of whether there were any actual shelter costs incurred. (Previously, someone had to demonstrate their shelter costs to receive any support.)

The minimum shelter allowance is intended to acknowledge the basic living expenses of people who are experiencing homelessness or have no fixed address. The allowance is based on the family unit size. For example, a single individual is eligible for a minimum shelter allowance of \$75, while a couple is eligible for a minimum shelter allowance of \$150.

Community Social Services Sector Technology Fund – Implemented in 2022

The Province provided \$1.5 million in grants to help community social service sector agencies upgrade their technologies.

The Community Social Services Sector Technology Fund was administered by the Federation of Community Social Services. The application process applied an equity lens to ensure small, rural, remote and Indigenous organizations are well served by the fund. The application intake opened September 2022 and the Tech Fund was fully subscribed and expensed by December 2022.

Period Poverty Funding – New funding in 2022

The ministry provided a \$750,000 conditional grant to United Way B.C. to:

- » Establish a Period Poverty Task Force that will look at ways to understand and find solutions to period poverty and develop a long-term comprehensive strategy to end period poverty in B.C.
- » Continue product delivery to people in need
- » Provide a total of \$220,000 (as much as \$25,000 per project) in funding to charities, non-profits and independent researchers for community-based, short-term, pilot projects. These projects must test models for increasing access to free menstrual products and exploring solutions to address the stigma and shame around menstruation in B.C.

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) funding – Expanded in 2022

The Province funded \$2.5 million for CNIB to expand its employment program for blind or partially sighted people. The program expansion will also address systemic barriers to meaningful employment for youth and Indigenous Peoples.

Community Integration Specialists – Expansion in 2022

Budget 2022 provided funding to more than double the number of Community Integration Specialists to 190.

Community Integration Specialists deliver in-person services to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, by connecting them with financial assistance and community resources. Community Integration Specialists help people connect with local community and government agencies, filling gaps that cannot be met with ministry supports alone. Some of the services Community Integration Specialists provide include:

- » Expedited assistance applications
- » Making connections to shelter and health services
- » Coordinated case management
- » Homeless outreach
- » Responding to inquiries from community partners
- » Coordination of services.

As well, Community Integration Specialists continue to expand partnerships with Aboriginal Friendship Centres to offer culturally appropriate services.

Non-Profit Recovery and Resiliency Fund – First intake and program design in 2022

In 2022, the Province announced a \$34 million Non-Profit Recovery and Resiliency Fund to support non-profit organizations that have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund is administered by the Vancouver Foundation and New Relationship Trust, an Indigenous-led funding organization, with support from United Way B.C.

This fund represents a new approach to granting. It tests a trust-based granting approach with organizations that are smaller and often have less capacity to apply for and receive funding. The Vancouver Foundation developed a process that required very little upfront input from applying organizations. Instead of a merit-based process, all applicants that meet eligibility requirements were entered into a lottery for a grant award. This aims to reduce organizations' burden when applying for funding. It also reduces competition between organizations, all of which provide valuable services and supports to people and families.

Social Services Sector Community Pathways to Reconciliation Project – New in 2022

In 2022, the ministry provided funding of \$9.6 million to the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres to lead the development and implementation of the Community Pathways to Reconciliation Project over five years. This aims to address emerging opportunities for capacity building, succession planning, and developing and implementing reconciliation capacity.

MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ARTS, CULTURE AND SPORT

Resilient, Inspire, Strength and Engage (RISE) Grant Program – New in 2022

RISE was launched in May 2022, investing \$3.6M to help youth in or formerly in government care participate in sport, physical and cultural activities. RISE aims to promote participation and connect young people to their communities and culture, creating a positive impact in their lives.

Grants of up to \$1,000 annually will help individuals cover costs for registration, equipment and travel for sport, physical and cultural activities. Grants of up to \$10,000 are also available for organizations to develop and deliver programs for children and youth in and formerly in care. Over 250 youth in and formerly in care received a RISE grant from June to December 2022.

BC Arts Council (BCAC) Funding: First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) Indigenous Arts

Scholarships and Indigenous Arts Program – New funding in 2022

The ministry funded \$1.725 million through the BCAC to FPCC to support the Indigenous Arts Awards program, a continuation of a 25-year partnership to directly support Indigenous artists, communities and cultural practices. This included the Indigenous Arts Scholarship program, which was previously funded separately. Funding across programs was combined to provide better flexibility and self-determination in meeting demand.

Extending Foundations: Action Plan 2022-2024 – New in 2022

In 2022, BCAC extended its 2018-2022 strategic plan (including the priorities of Indigenous Arts and Culture, Equity, Diversity and Access, and Regional Arts and Community Arts) through the introduction of Extending Foundations: Action Plan (2022-2024), implementing:

- » **Designated Priority Groups policy: providing strategic measures (through dedicated programs, funding prioritization processes, partnerships and outreach) for applicants from Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit), deaf and disability, Black and people of colour, and regional communities**
- » **Application Assistance: providing a contribution to practitioners who are deaf or have a disability to support registering, applying for and reporting on BCAC grants**
- » **Access Support: providing specific accessibility services and supplies to enable the full participation of practitioners who are deaf or have a disability**

COVID Recovery – New in 2022

BCAC delivered \$12.5 million in funding from the Province in 2022. These funds support the arts sector as it works towards recovery and renewal from the pandemic.

Three-Year Plan for Revitalization of Tourism – New in 2022

B.C. has launched a new three-year roadmap for rebuilding and revitalizing tourism, creating jobs and opportunities for people and communities in every part of the province.

Requested by B.C. tourism industry leaders and the Tourism Task Force, the update of this framework focuses on provincial priorities of:

- » **Putting people first**
- » **Lasting and meaningful reconciliation**
- » **Equity and anti-racism**
- » **A better future through fighting climate change**
- » **A strong and sustainable economy that works for everyone**

Expression of Interest for First Nations to repatriate ancestral remains through FPCC – New in 2022

B.C. funded \$750,000 through the FPCC to assist First Nation communities repatriating cultural belongings and ancestral remains. Repatriation of ancestral remains is a crucial component of ongoing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

Applicants could apply for up to \$50,000. Recipients could use this funding to implement a broad range of repatriation projects specific to bringing home their ancestors and cultural treasures.

Amplify BC – New in 2022

Amplify BC partnered with the Vancouver Music Fund to extend three programs (Demo Recording, Music Video and Industry Catalyst) to 89 under-represented musicians outside of the City of Vancouver.

BC Sport Participation Program (BCSPP) – Ongoing

In 2022, the Province continued its partnership with the federal government to fund the BCSPP and Indigenous youth programs to a total of just over \$1.3 million. This funding supports sports and physical activity opportunities for under-represented populations (e.g., low income, Indigenous, new Canadians, females, disability and older adult populations).

This investment includes annual support to the Urban Native Youth Association (in Vancouver's downtown east side) for its Aboriginal Youth First Sport and Recreation programs to deliver sport and recreation programs for youth.

Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council (ISPARC) funding – Ongoing

The Province provided \$1.4 million in funding for ISPARC's Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Strategy. This is in alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action related to sport (87-91) and the Declaration Act Action Plan.

More than 25,000 Indigenous people are reached each year through this funding. The pandemic severely impacted ISPARC's program delivery, but the organization has now returned to their previous levels of programming. It has been able to provide youth sport camps, leadership training, coaching clinics and virtual fitness programming (FitNation). ISPARC continues to support Indigenous communities that are beginning to recover from the pandemic.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

Active Transportation Grant Programs – Ongoing

Provincial investments in active transportation (bike, walking, e assisted devices, other self-propelled transportation) aim to increase the availability and quality of active transportation infrastructure.

Projects funded through the Active Transportation Grants Program provide safe, accessible transportation options, benefitting low-income British Columbians, especially those without access to a vehicle.

In 2022, 74 projects were funded through these grants.

Changes to the Transportation Act – Implementation in 2022

Changes to the Transportation Act (Bill 16) allow the Province, through the B.C. Transportation Financing Authority (BCTFA), to acquire land to build housing and community amenities that serve people near transit stations and bus exchanges.

In 2022, the strategy to develop the transit-oriented development program started to guide the BCTFA to identify, prioritize and determine how properties will be acquired under Bill 16.

Surrey Langley SkyTrain – Funding approved in 2022

The Surrey Langley SkyTrain extension project will support an area with a fast-growing population (representing 25 per cent of the population of Metro Vancouver) help:

- » Improve public transit accessibility for residents and businesses south of the Fraser River
- » Connect more people to housing, employment and schools
- » Encourage greater development around SkyTrain stations

The project includes eight new stations and three new bus exchanges.

The project's business case received approval for \$3.94 million in provincial funding in 2022.

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

New Permitting Strategy for Housing – New in 2022

This new strategy will streamline the permitting process into a single, co-ordinated approach to housing-related permits and authorizations. This will eliminate the need for multiple applications across ministries and allow more homes to be built faster in B.C.

Improved Access to Internet – New intake in 2022

The Governments of B.C. and Canada invested up to \$830 million to support connectivity infrastructure projects that will improve access to high-speed internet for underserved rural communities and First Nations in B.C.

The B.C. government's commitment to support expansion of high-speed internet services to all communities by 2027 will level the playing field for British Columbians. It will ensure every community has better access to jobs, education, training and health care.



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