



September 19, 2024

24-18

BC Prosecution Service releases the 2023/24 Annual Report

Victoria – Today, the BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) released its 2023/24 Annual Report, which provides information about:

- the role of the BCPS and Crown Counsel and the values that guide our work
- the regional and operational divisions of BCPS
- the criminal justice process
- operational data, including comparison data for the last five fiscal years and office-level data about charge assessment decisions, active prosecutions, and concluded prosecutions in fiscal 2023/24

The Annual Report also provides information on the BCPS budget, innovations and accomplishments, and awards and achievements of our people.

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To learn more about BC's criminal justice system, visit the British Columbia Prosecution Service website at: gov.bc.ca/prosecutionservice or follow [@bcprosecution](https://twitter.com/bcprosecution).



Prosecution Service

Annual Report 2023/24

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Message from the Acting ADAG

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) for fiscal year 2023/24. That year ended last March with the retirement of Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Peter Juk, KC. This report reflects the considerable legacy of his seven-year term and how he has left us well-positioned for the challenges of the future and those that are already upon us.

Our team of lawyers, professional staff, and managers continued fulfilling our core mandate under the *Crown Counsel Act* of approving and conducting prosecutions and appeals, advising government on criminal law matters, liaising with the public and the media, and developing policies and procedures in respect of the administration of criminal justice in British Columbia.



Trevor Shaw
A/Assistant Deputy Attorney General

Some of our notable achievements and innovations in the last fiscal year included:

- **Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative (ReVOII).** In response to the province's *Safer Communities Action Plan*, the BCPS implemented a team of Crown Counsel and professional staff to adopt a prolific offender management model to address repeat violent offending in BC Communities. During fiscal 2023/24, five Regional hubs were fully staffed, and prioritized individuals were placed into the Program. Coordinated, consistent and streamlined information sharing and dedicated resources have assisted prosecutors in making informed decisions about charge assessments, bail, and prosecutions. The Program provides for improved information sharing between justice system partners that focuses on the individuals presenting a heightened risk to public safety across the province.
- **Bail Program Enhancements.** The BCPS completed implementation of its Comprehensive Bail Program, and now has conduct of weekday, weekday evening and weekend/statutory holiday bail hearings. Most hearings are conducted virtually. Having specialized teams of Crown Counsel and professional staff focussed on bail enables responsiveness to changes to bail-related law, such as Bill C-48, which came into force on January 4, 2024, amending bail provisions of the *Criminal Code* to address widespread concerns about crimes being committed by repeat violent offenders.
- **Digital Evidence and Disclosure Management System (DEMS).** During fiscal year 2023/24, further progress was made towards an integrated disclosure system linking police, Crown and eventually defence counsel. The project team focused on BCPS user implementation, employee training and initial system rollout across BCPS Regions. Internal BCPS usage rates are steadily increasing. Implementation activities and change-

management support will continue through fiscal 2024/25 including ongoing system enhancements. Future challenges for this ambitious project including completing DEMS integration with police file applications and data-sharing portals with defence counsel and accused. Working on these priorities will continue during 2024/25.

In this Annual Report, you will find the following information for the 2023/24 fiscal year:

- An overview of the criminal justice process in British Columbia and the role the BCPS plays within it;
- Statistical summaries and data about the work of the BCPS; and,
- A description of our operational structure, regional spotlights, and a financial summary.

We have been in a period of leadership transition since the end of fiscal 2023/24 and I am particularly grateful to those who have shared with me the duties of Acting Assistant Deputy Attorney General: Alisia Adams, John Labossiere and Lori Stevens. In turn, we are all grateful for the work done by each and every employee.

That our operations have continued unabated during this time of change is a measure of the solidity of our organization, the professionalism of all of its members and, ultimately, the critical and necessary role the BCPS plays in the life of this province.

Trevor Shaw
Acting Assistant Deputy Attorney General

About the BC Prosecution Service

Vision

An independent prosecution service that people respect and trust.

Mission

We make timely, principled, and impartial charge assessment decisions that promote public safety, justice, and respect for the rule of law.

We conduct independent, effective, and fair prosecutions and appeals.

We strive to do the right thing for the right reasons and to be transparent about how we do it.

Values

These values guide the BC Prosecution Service in everything we do:

- Justice
- Independence
- Fairness
- Integrity
- Professionalism

Crown Counsel Act

The mandate of the BC Prosecution Service, which is the Criminal Justice Branch of the Ministry of Attorney General, is defined by the [Crown Counsel Act](#), RSBC 1996 Chapter 87. Under the [Crown Counsel Act](#), the BCPS:

- a) approves and conducts prosecutions of all criminal and provincial offences in British Columbia;
- b) initiates and conducts all appeals and other proceedings for these prosecutions;
- c) conducts appeals or other proceedings for prosecutions in which the Crown is named as a respondent;
- d) advises the government on all criminal law matters;
- e) develops policies and procedures for the administration of criminal justice in British Columbia;
- f) interacts with the media and affected members of the public on matters respecting the approval and conduct of prosecutions or related appeals; and,
- g) carries out any other function or responsibility assigned by the Attorney General (AG).

The Assistant Deputy Attorney General (ADAG) heads the BCPS and is charged with its the administration and with carrying out its mandate as outlined above. The ADAG designates lawyers as “Crown Counsel”, who represent the Crown in all provincial prosecution-related matters before all courts. Subject to the ADAG’s direction, Crown Counsel are authorized to:

- Examine all relevant information and documents and, following the examination, to approve for prosecution any offences they consider appropriate;
- Conduct the prosecutions approved; and,
- Supervise prosecutions of offences that are being initiated or conducted by individuals who are not Crown Counsel and, if the interests of justice require, intervene, and conduct those prosecutions.

The AG is ultimately responsible for prosecutions falling within provincial jurisdiction and must fulfill this constitutional role judicially, in a manner that is independent from the political side of governing. In British Columbia, the [Crown Counsel Act](#) gives the ADAG effective responsibility for the administration of all prosecutorial functions, subject to specific directions from the AG. Daily prosecution functions are carried out by Crown Counsel.

In carrying out these functions, Crown Counsel have legal and constitutional obligations to act as “ministers of justice”, exercising their prosecutorial discretion independently of government and

police, and without regard for inappropriate pressure from any quarter. They must follow the law, as set out in the federal [Criminal Code](#), and interpreted by BC's courts and the Supreme Court of Canada. They are assisted and guided in this task by BCPS [policy](#), which directly reflects the prevailing legislation and caselaw.

Political, personal, and private considerations must not affect the way prosecutors conduct their cases. The role of prosecutor excludes any notion of winning or losing. It is a public function carrying with it great personal responsibility, and it must be carried out efficiently, with a sense of dignity, seriousness, and justice.

Role of Crown Counsel and Prosecutorial Independence

Crown Counsel's paramount duty is to see justice done in each case. Crown Counsel do not represent individual victims. When a crime is committed, it is a crime against society as a whole and Crown Counsel perform their function on behalf of the entire community. In practice, this means that while Crown Counsel conduct prosecutions vigorously, their first duty is to ensure the trial process is fair, the evidence is presented thoroughly and accurately, and the integrity of the justice process is maintained. Crown Counsel are entrusted with the prosecution of all offences and appeals in British Columbia which arise under Canada's [Criminal Code](#) and do not fall within the jurisdiction of the federal prosecution service (e.g., prosecutions under the [Controlled Drugs and Substances Act](#)). They also prosecute provincial regulatory offences.

British Columbia is one of three provinces in Canada where prosecutors decide whether criminal charges should be laid before a matter enters the court system. Police services and other investigative agencies prepare a Report to Crown Counsel (RCCs) setting out the evidence relating to an alleged offence. Crown Counsel independently assess whether charges should be laid, based on the whole of the available evidence contained in the RCC.

The charge assessment guidelines that Crown Counsel must apply in reviewing all RCCs are established by policy that is available [online](#).

When charges are approved, the charge assessment standard continues to apply throughout the prosecution. If the standard for continuing a prosecution is no longer met, Crown Counsel must end the prosecution.

Pre-approval of charges by Crown Counsel ensures, as much as reasonably possible, that only viable cases proceed to court and that they are completed in a timely way. Oversight of the charging process by Crown Counsel also acts as a safeguard against miscarriages of justice.

The Supreme Court of Canada recently underlined the importance of Crown Counsel's independence from the police. Crown Counsel's role is:

...to assess whether a prosecution is in the public interest and, if so, to carry out that prosecution in accordance with the prosecutor's duties to the administration of justice and the accused... "Prosecutors provide the initial checks and balances to the power of the police". ...Independent prosecutorial review of the police's investigative process and decisions helps "ensure that both investigations and prosecutions are conducted more thoroughly, and thus more fairly" ... (Ontario (Attorney General) v Clark, 2021 SCC 18, at paragraphs 41 to 45)

Role of Special Prosecutors

When there is a significant potential for perceived or real improper influence in prosecutorial decision-making in a given case, a Special Prosecutor may be appointed to conduct the charge assessment and any ensuing prosecution and appeal. Special Prosecutors are appointed from a list of senior lawyers in private practice, which is reviewed every five years. Only the ADAG has authority to appoint Special Prosecutors under the [Crown Counsel Act](#). The paramount consideration is the need to maintain public confidence in the administration of criminal justice.

Once appointed, Special Prosecutors perform the same role as regular Crown Counsel. They do not initiate, lead, or control police investigations and they must adhere to the policies of the BCPS when conducting their cases, including the charge assessment guidelines. However, they carry out their functions with greater independence from the BCPS.

The Criminal Justice Process

This section provides a summary of the criminal justice process in British Columbia and statistics on the work of the BCPS. The data source for the statistics, unless otherwise noted, is the Justice Information System (JUSTIN), a case management system that is used by investigative agencies, Crown Counsel, and the courts in British Columbia.

The BCPS has developed some key performance indicators (KPIs) which help assess and measure performance:

- Judicial Stays of Proceedings (for delay only)
- Charge Assessment Duration
- Prosecution File Duration
- Percent of all files and percent of intimate partner violence-related files that resolve at or before arraignment
- Workforce Engagement Score

These KPIs are noted within the following tables, except for the Workforce Engagement Score, which is included in the financial summary.

Investigations

The BCPS works with numerous investigative agencies with diverse mandates. Over 80 percent of RCCs are submitted by police agencies. Most of the remaining RCCs are submitted by BC Corrections, with less than one percent being submitted by other types of investigative agencies, such as the BC Conservation Officer Service and financial regulators.

When an alleged crime is reported to an investigative agency, or the agency itself identifies a possible offence, the agency will investigate and decide whether the incident warrants forwarding an RCC with recommended charges to the BCPS. Crown Counsel do not investigate offences. It is the responsibility of the investigative agency, which functions independently from the BCPS, to investigate and exercise its own discretion in deciding whether to forward an RCC for charge assessment and prosecution.

Charge Assessments

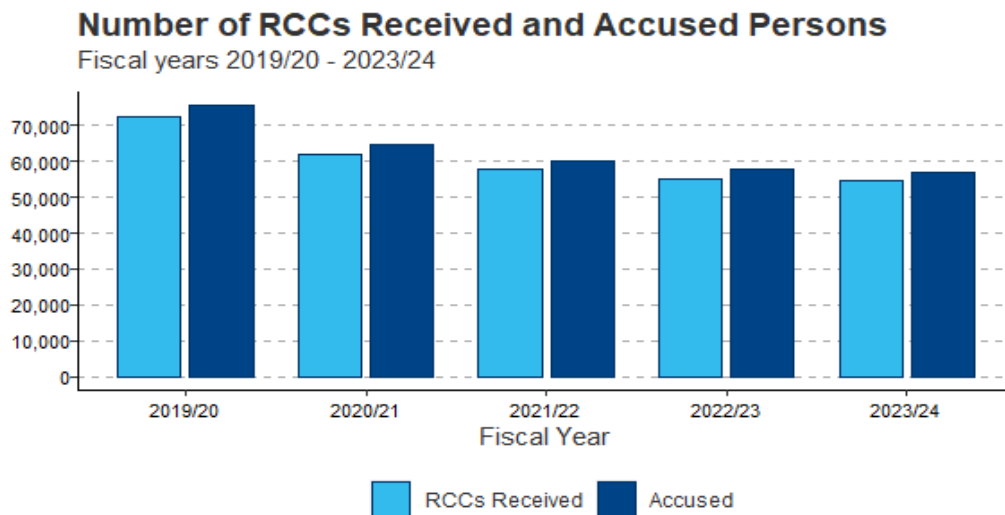
When Crown Counsel receive an RCC, they assess whether charges should be approved in accordance with the BCPS's Charge Assessment Guidelines ([CHA 1](#)) policy, which lays out a standard for charge approval. That standard requires Crown Counsel to independently, objectively, and fairly measure all the available evidence against a two-part test.:

1. Whether there is a substantial likelihood of conviction; and, if so,
2. Whether the public interest requires a prosecution.

Crown Counsel complete charge assessments as quickly as they can, while still conducting a thorough analysis and making a principled decision. Crown Counsel may decide that charges should or should not be laid, or that the accused person should be referred for alternative measures. For more complex cases, the charge assessment process may be prolonged.

Once the charge assessment has been conducted and charges are approved to court, a new prosecution file is created. The formal court process is initiated by swearing an Information (the charging document).

Figure 1: Number of RCCs Received and Accused Persons



For the most recent fiscal year, the volume received was 9.5% below the average of the five fiscal-year period. The BCPS received a total of 54,604 RCCs in 2023/24, a decrease of 1.1% from 2022/23. The RCCs received had a total of 56,948 accused persons named, 4.7% of whom were youth (those 12 to 17 years of age on the offence date). The percentage of all accused named on RCCs received that were young persons has remained stable over the last several years.

Table 1: RCCs Received and Accused Persons

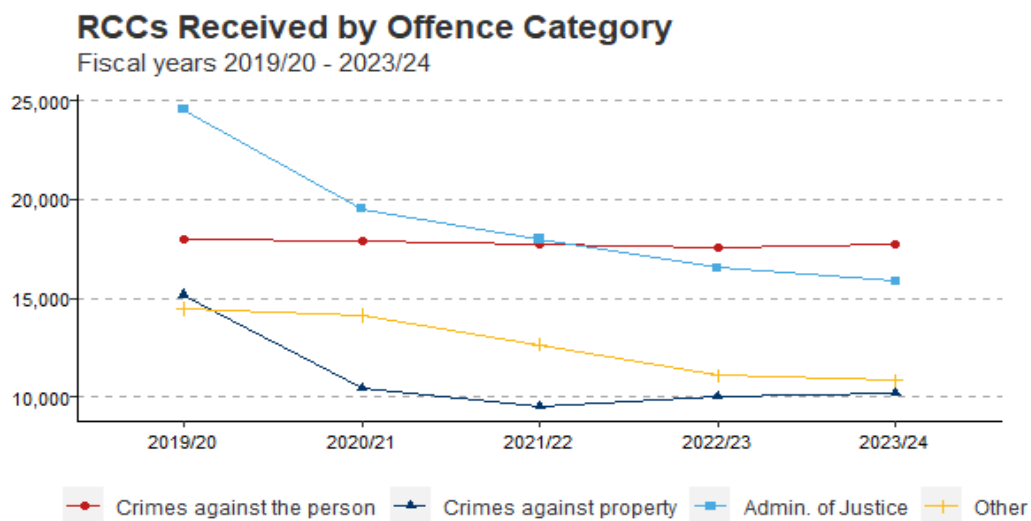
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
RCCs Received	72,148	61,976	57,857	55,217	54,604
Accused	75,429	64,578	60,198	57,603	56,948
Adult %	96%	97%	97%	96%	95%
Youth %	4%	3%	3%	4%	5%
Accused In Custody	17,487	12,681	11,566	11,255	12,326
Accused In Custody %	23%	20%	19%	20%	22%

1. Source: JUSTIN database (extracted July 14, 2024)

2. An RCC is counted once based on the date it was first entered in JUSTIN, regardless of the number of accused persons, number of charges, or number of counts. An accused is counted as being in custody on an RCC if the 'in-custody' flag is active in JUSTIN upon receipt of a new RCC. Please note that since this data is based on RCCs captured in JUSTIN, it excludes work done on files where an official RCC has not been received from police, or where the file is originally civil in nature, such as the prosecution for contempt of court arising from a breach of a civil court order. Contempt of court prosecutions can require a significant amount of Crown and administrative resources that are not captured in our data.

This trend of decreasing RCC counts began as a result of societal changes brought on by COVID-19, but has persisted through the most recent fiscal year. The biggest changes over the last five years have been observed in the decreased number of RCCs involving Crimes against Property and Administration of Justice (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: RCCs Received by Offence Category



Charge Assessment Decisions

When a decision is made to approve charges, a new prosecution file (or multiple prosecution files) will be initiated. In 2023/24 there were a total of 55,914 charge assessment decisions made for accused named on RCCs, a decrease of 2.2% from the previous fiscal year. A total of 42,421 accused persons had charges approved, resulting in a 76% approval rate.

Figure 3: Charge Assessment Decisions

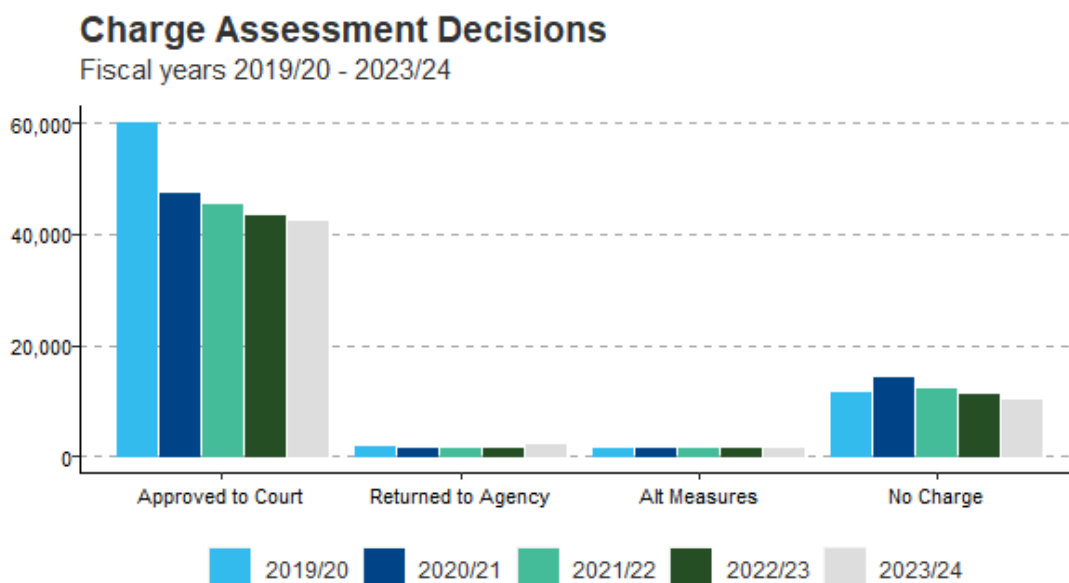


Table 2: Charge Assessment Decisions

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Charge Assessment Decisions	74,938	64,147	59,826	57,173	55,914
% Alt Measures	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
% Approved to Court	80%	74%	75%	76%	76%
% No Charge	15%	22%	20%	19%	18%
% Returned to Agency	2%	2%	2%	3%	4%

1. Source: JUSTIN database (extracted July 14, 2024)

2. Charge assessment decisions are counted once for each accused person named on RCCs received in the fiscal year. If an accused person has at least one charge approved by Crown Counsel, the charge decision is recorded as 'Approved to Court'.

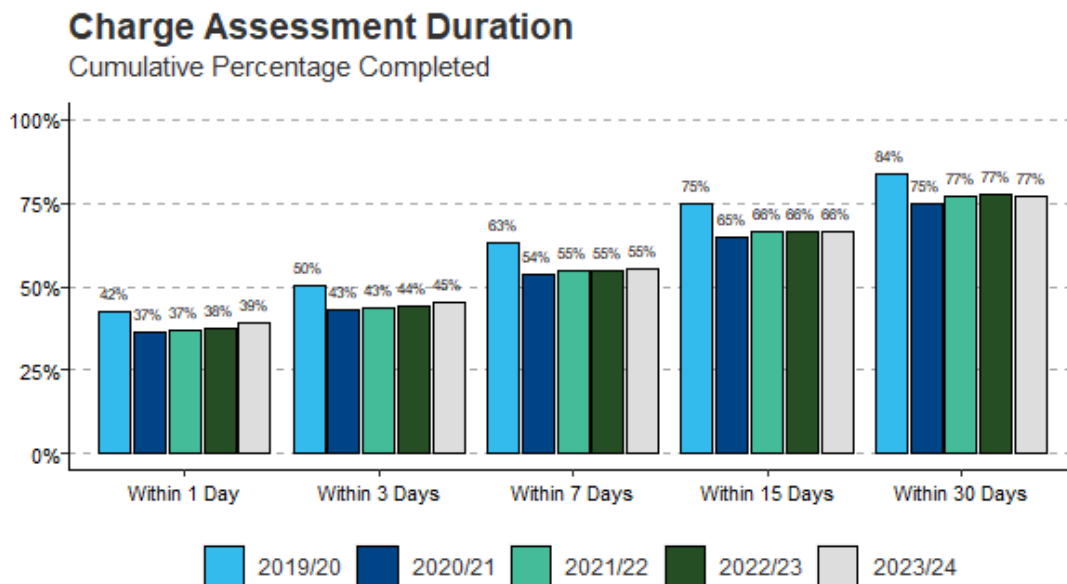
Charge Assessment Duration

This key performance indicator measures how many days it takes Crown Counsel to complete charge assessment, from the date an RCC is received to the date Crown Counsel makes a charge decision.

The data indicates that Crown Counsel are taking more time to make and record charge assessment decisions. Part of the explanation for the increase in charge assessment duration may be that the BCPS has seen the volume of RCCs alleging less serious offences decline significantly over the last couple of years, while the volume alleging more serious offences, such as intimate partner violence and sexual assault files, have remained stable or increased, resulting in a higher proportion of more serious RCCs needing to be assessed.

Figure 4 shows the time taken for crown assessment decisions over the previous 5 fiscal years. The impact of COVID-19 since 2019/20 can be seen in each of the time ranges.

Figure 4: Time to Charge Assessment Decisions



Prosecutions & Appeals

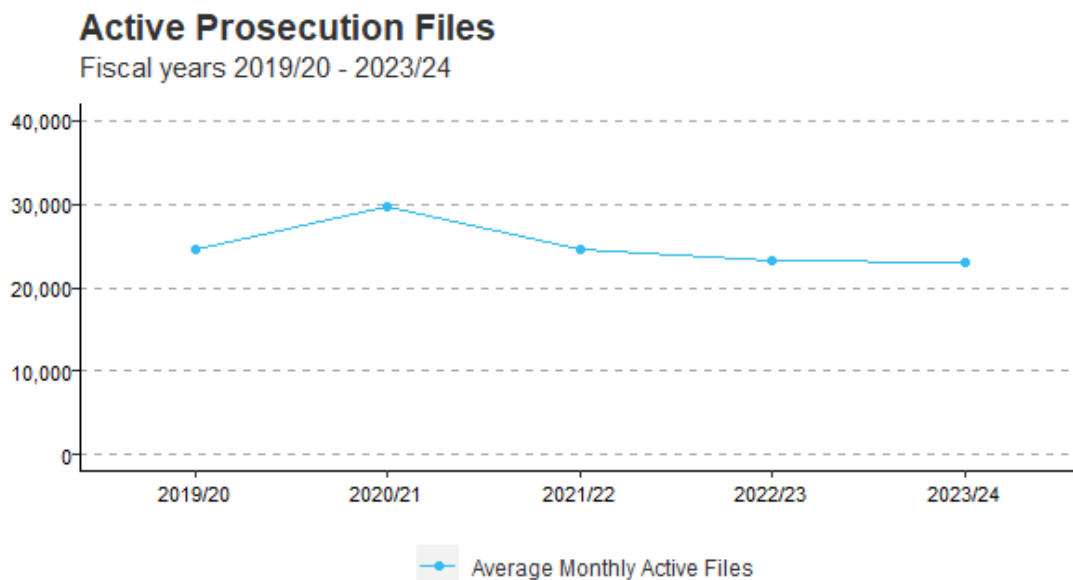
Crown Counsel conduct prosecutions and appeals in every level of court: the Provincial Court of British Columbia, the British Columbia Supreme Court, the British Columbia Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court of Canada.

When doing so, they are bound by the legal principles contained in the [Criminal Code](#), as interpreted, and applied by the courts of British Columbia and the Supreme Court of Canada. Crown Counsel's decision making must also be informed by and consistent with the constitutional rights guaranteed under the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#).

Active Prosecutions

The number of active prosecutions being handled by BCPS is an indicator of resource sufficiency for BCPS and the broader justice sector (e.g. a growing active file count could indicate insufficient resources). While 2020/21 showed a significant jump in the active file count, the backlog which was created by process interruptions due to COVID-19, the BCPS and other parts of the BC justice system have reduced the active file count back to pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 5: Active Prosecution Files



Concluded Prosecutions

A total of 41,042 prosecutions were concluded in 2023/24. Concluded file volumes have decreased proportionately with the decrease in the number of RCCs that have been received.

Table 3: Concluded Prosecutions

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Concluded Prosecutions	56,836	45,527	45,249	42,897	41,042
Adult	54,774	43,999	43,969	41,632	39,398
Youth	2,062	1,528	1,280	1,265	1,644

1. Source: JUSTIN database (extracted July 14, 2024)
 2. A concluded prosecution is counted once for each accused person on a file that concluded in the fiscal year. If an accused person was on more than one file that concluded in the fiscal year, they are counted each time.

Figure 6 shows statistics related to the outcomes of concluded prosecutions. In 2020/21 (COVID-19 pandemic), the proportion of guilty findings dropped by approximately 10% and stayed findings increased by the same amount. This effect has largely faded, with no notable shifts observed in the proportions of outcomes for concluded files when comparing 2023/24 against the average of the prior fiscal years.

Figure 6: Concluded Prosecutions by Finding

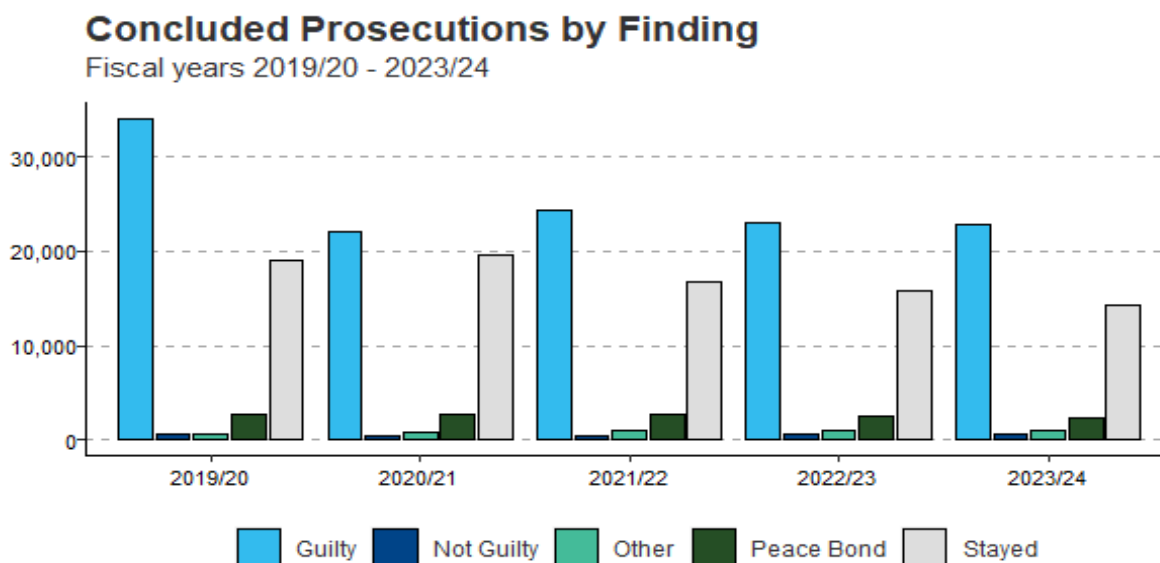


Table 4: Concluded Prosecutions by Finding

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Concluded Files by File Outcome	56,836	45,527	45,249	42,897	41,042
% Guilty	60%	49%	54%	54%	55%
% Not Guilty	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
% Other	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%
% Peace Bond	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%
% Stayed	33%	43%	37%	37%	35%

1. Source: JUSTIN database (extracted July 14, 2024)
 2. A concluded prosecution is counted once for each accused person on a file that concluded in the fiscal year. If an accused person was on more than one file that concluded in the fiscal year, they are counted each time.

Percentage of Files Concluded at or before Arraignment

This key performance indicator measures the percentage of files concluded at or before arraignment. A higher percentage means that a higher proportion of files are concluded at the earliest stages in the criminal process.

The proportion of files reaching early resolution has remained stable over the last five years. Even in the face of court backlogs and delays during the pandemic, we continued to resolve the majority of files at or before an arraignment hearing.

Table 5: Percent of Files Concluded Early (at or before Arraignment Hearing)

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
% Files Concluded Early	71%	73%	71%	73%	70%

1. Source: Data collected through the BCPS File Closing Summary.
 2. 'Early' is defined as a file which was concluded at or before arraignment.

Prosecution File Duration

This key performance indicator measures how many days it takes for a criminal file to conclude. It has been taking longer to conclude files over the last few years. In the first year of the pandemic, court operations initially shut down completely and then reopened partially during the remainder of the fiscal year. This aligns with the backlogs we experienced in active file volumes. Despite the pandemic-related changes to court operations which continue to be a factor in the timeframe for

prosecution resolution, the days-to-conclusion metric is steadily decreasing. This reflects improvements in existing processes and the clearing out of files which were delayed due to COVID-19's initial impact.

Table 6: Prosecution File Duration

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Median Days to Conclusion	106	186	176	168	166
1. Source: JUSTIN database (extracted July 14, 2024) 2. The duration of a prosecution file is measured from the date the Information was first sworn or filed in court to the disposition date. Any bench warrant days associated with the file are excluded from the calculation.					

Stays of Proceedings

Throughout the course of a prosecution, Crown Counsel have an ongoing obligation to assess its viability and ensure that it continues to meet the BCPS charge assessment standard. Many things can affect the viability of charges after they are initially approved, including (but not limited to): material changes in the strength of the prosecution's evidence; new evidence that would provide a principled basis for a finding of reasonable doubt; witness unavailability or lack of co-operation; or, new information that changes the assessment of whether the public interest requires a formal prosecution.

If the charge assessment standard is no longer met, Crown Counsel must end the prosecution. Usually that is done by directing a stay of proceedings. Approximately half of all stays of proceedings directed by Crown Counsel still involve some other form of consequence for the accused, such as a peace bond, referral to an alternative measures program, or a guilty plea on another file or to a different charge.

Number of Judicial Stays of Proceedings for Delay

This key performance indicator measures the number of times in the reporting period that judges stayed criminal charges prosecuted by BCPS due to unreasonable delay. The number of judicial stays of proceedings of BCPS cases were declining over the last five fiscal years until 2023/24, when there were a total of 14 prosecutions concluded with a judicial stay of proceedings. We are back at pre-pandemic levels (i.e. fiscal 2017/18)

Table 7: Judicial Stay of Proceedings for Delay

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Judicial Stays of Proceeding	8	8	6	4	14
1. Judicial stays of proceedings decisions are recorded in JUSTIN but the reason for the decision is not recorded. A judicial stay of proceedings can be for reasons other than delay, such as abuse of process. To obtain a count of the judicial stay decisions specifically for delay, the Court Services Branch contacts the relevant court registry for each judicial stay decision to confirm what the reason was.					

File Outcomes

Of the matters in 2023/24 for which charges were approved and which proceeded to court, 55.0% resulted in a conviction – by way of guilty plea or a guilty verdict after trial. If an accused pleads guilty or is found guilty after a trial, Crown Counsel are responsible for making a recommendation on sentence. The decision about what sentence to impose is made by the court.

Criminal Contempt Proceedings

On invitation of the BC Supreme Court, Crown Counsel may intervene and conduct criminal contempt prosecutions under the BCPS *Civil Disobedience (CIV1)* policy. In recent years, the BCPS has conducted hundreds of individual prosecutions of this type, which can be resource intensive and legally complex. However, because of their unique nature, these cases are not tracked as [Criminal Code](#) matters and are not included in the statistic overview provided in this Annual Report.

Supporting Victims & Witnesses

The BCPS works diligently to ensure that all victims and witnesses are supported in their participation in the criminal justice process.

As defined in the British Columbia [Victims of Crime Act](#) (VOCA), a victim is an individual who suffers physical or mental injury, or economic loss because of an offence. There can be secondary victims who have suffered emotional trauma because of an offence caused against a family member.

Crown Counsel prepare victims for court and provide them with appropriate information about the prosecution and the criminal justice system. Crown Counsel may meet with victims and their families to assist them in understanding the prosecution process.

When there are particular concerns for the safety of the victim, or there is a request by the victim for ongoing information, Crown Counsel take steps to ensure that the victim is notified, either directly by administrative staff or through a victim assistance program, about the course of the prosecution, any future court dates, any bail conditions, and any changes in those proceedings or conditions. In appropriate situations, Crown Counsel will make applications for testimonial accommodations.

Under VOCA and the [Canadian Victims Bill of Rights](#), victims are provided with *Victim Impact Statement* (VIS) forms and other guidance regarding the criminal justice process. If charges are approved, a Victim Impact Statement & Statement on Restitution Information Guide is sent to victims by BCPS local offices. Community Impact Statements are also possible in some circumstances.

Victims, witnesses, and members of the public are also invited to learn more about the BCPS and the work we do from our online [BCPS information sheets](#).

Several of the BCPS policies, including *Charge Assessment Guidelines* ([CHA 1](#)), *Intimate Partner Violence* ([IPV 1](#)), and *Vulnerable Victims and Witnesses* ([VUL 1](#)), and information sheets have been translated into French, Spanish, Chinese (simplified), Filipino, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, and Vietnamese.

Statistical Overview

Crime Statistics

The primary workload driver for the BCPS is the volume of RCCs received from police and other investigative agencies and the complexity of the cases those RCCs represent. For this reason, overall crime trends directly affect our organization. It is important to note, however, that police-reported crime statistics reflect only those incidents that are reported to the police which can be affected by population, police enforcement strategies, large-scale criminal events, social movements, and changes in legislation, policies, or procedures.

As reported by Statistics Canada, the pandemic has had a significant impact on crime numbers . What we saw in British Columbia was reflective of the crime trends from across the country. Widespread decreases in the volume and rate of police-reported criminal incidents were reported not only in British Columbia but across Canada during 2020. This trend has continued through the previous fiscal year, with all regions seeing either a continued reduction or plateau in all categories of incidents being reported.

In British Columbia overall, police-reported property crime rates (e.g., break and enter, theft, shoplifting) have levelled off after declining 31% in 2020. In contrast, police-reported crimes against the person (the category which includes violent crimes) has remained largely stable for the past five fiscal years. This category did not show any notable change as a result of the pandemic.

Reports to Crown Counsel

Five-Year Trends

Because not all incidents which are reported to police result in criminal charges, the trends observed by BCPS may differ from those reported by police agencies. In other words, it can be misleading to compare crime rate trends with new RCC trends without looking at the number of reported incidents that the police have actually cleared by way of submitting an RCC to BCPS (i.e. cleared by charge). Looking at BCPS crime trends by region¹, there is some variability, but no region goes against the overall trends. Comparing 2023/24 against the prior four fiscal years, the Fraser region still shows a decline in all offence categories. The Vancouver, Interior, and Northern regions have shown a small increase in crimes against person and property in the most recent year, and the Vancouver Island region has shown decreases in all categories except crimes against property.

¹The BCPS groups BC into five geographic regions: Vancouver Island, Vancouver, Fraser, Interior, and Northern. These regions align with the BC Court's classifications.

Between 2019/20 and 2023 /24, the total volume of RCCs received by BCPS has varied by $\pm 9\%$ (See [Figure 1](#)). This large variability is due almost entirely to the effects of COVID-19, as described in various sections above.

Although the absolute number of RCCs has decreased in all categories, the relative proportions of RCCs in different categories have not remained constant. Of note, the proportion of intimate partner violence (IPV) RCCs has increased to 21.6% from 18.6% in 2019/20. IPV RCCs are those involving offences between an accused and any person with whom the accused has, or has had, an ongoing close and personal or intimate relationship. IPV cases involve very serious, prevalent, and complex problems requiring a special response which is engaged, coordinated, and vigorous.

When we look at the five-year trend for RCCs received under the four main offence categories, we see substantive decreases in raw counts across the board except for crimes against the person which has remained largely stable.

- *Crimes against the person* – 17,693 RCCs received in 2023/24, 0.5% below the 5-year average (17,774)
- *Property Crimes* – 10,214 RCCs received in 2023/24, 7.7% below the 5-year average (11,068)
- *Administration of Justice* – 15,864 RCCs received in 2023/24, 16% below the 5-year average (18,879)
- *Other offences* – 10,833 RCCs received in 2023/24, 14.3% below the 5-year average (12,639)

Although the volume of RCCs differs across the five BCPS regions, the overall trends we see at the provincial level are consistent across the regions with only minor differences.

Provincial Overview

The tables on the following pages provide high-level statistics at the provincial- and location-level. Breakdowns are provided at the provincial level between: all files; IPV files, and youth files.

Table 8: Provincial Overview: All Files

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
General Information					
# Crown Offices	41	41	41	41	41
# Court Locations	91	91	91	91	91
British Columbia Population	5,157,053	5,180,015	5,286,478	5,431,355	5,609,870
Investigation					
RCCs Received	72,148	61,976	57,857	55,217	54,604
RCCs per 1,000 Population	14	12	11	10	10
Crimes against property	15,173	10,444	9,506	10,004	10,214
Crimes against the person	17,986	17,890	17,716	17,583	17,693
Administration Of Justice	24,526	19,500	17,976	16,530	15,864
Other Categories	14,463	14,142	12,659	11,100	10,833
Accused	75,429	64,578	60,198	57,603	56,948
Accused In Custody	17,487	12,681	11,566	11,255	12,326
Charge Assessment					
Charge Assessment Decisions	74,938	64,147	59,826	57,173	55,914
Alt Measures	1,562	1,290	1,313	1,367	1,266
Approved to Court	60,091	47,433	45,130	43,316	42,421
No Charge	11,504	14,066	12,102	11,023	10,217
Returned to Agency	1,781	1,358	1,281	1,467	2,010
Prosecution					
Average Monthly Active Files	24,512	29,666	24,570	23,345	23,096
Concluded Prosecutions	56,836	45,527	45,249	42,897	41,042
% Files Concluded Early	71.1%	72.9%	70.7%	72.7%	70.3%
Median Days to Conclusion	106	186	176	168	166
File Outcomes					
Concluded Files by File Outcome	56,836	45,527	45,249	42,897	41,042
Guilty	34,024	22,133	24,345	23,077	22,768
Not Guilty	702	347	511	620	540
Other	565	841	999	953	1,064
Peace Bond	2,628	2,624	2,627	2,493	2,341
Stayed	18,917	19,582	16,767	15,754	14,329

1. Source: JUSTIN database (extracted July 14, 2024)

Table 9: Provincial Overview: IPV Files

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
General Information					
# Crown Offices	41	41	41	41	41
# Court Locations	91	91	91	91	91
British Columbia Population	5,157,053	5,180,015	5,286,478	5,431,355	5,609,870
Investigation					
RCCs Received	13,885	13,581	12,855	12,273	12,213
RCCs per 1,000 Population	3	3	2	2	2
Crimes against property	332	316	303	297	266
Crimes against the person	7,755	7,950	7,737	7,468	7,646
Administration Of Justice	5,276	4,809	4,327	4,062	3,874
Other Categories	522	506	488	446	427
Accused	13,994	13,674	12,956	12,352	12,286
Accused In Custody	4,952	4,647	4,291	4,129	4,520
Charge Assessment					
Charge Assessment Decisions	13,981	13,663	12,949	12,335	12,213
Alt Measures	148	162	188	173	159
Approved to Court	11,515	10,483	10,004	9,396	9,250
No Charge	2,100	2,866	2,612	2,576	2,524
Returned to Agency	218	152	145	190	280
Prosecution					
Concluded Prosecutions	11,594	10,619	10,140	9,806	9,322
% Files Concluded Early	61.1%	69.4%	62.0%	65.1%	63.7%
Median Days to Conclusion	126	178	172	176	180
File Outcomes					
Concluded Files by File Outcome	11,594	10,619	10,140	9,806	9,322
Guilty	4,705	3,512	3,492	3,349	3,493
Not Guilty	197	80	155	178	137
Other	84	156	181	174	151
Peace Bond	1,452	1,406	1,343	1,309	1,164
Stayed	5,156	5,465	4,969	4,796	4,377
1. Source: JUSTIN database (extracted July 14, 2024)					

Table 10: Provincial Overview: Youth Files

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
General Information					
# Crown Offices	41	41	41	41	41
# Court Locations	91	91	91	91	91
British Columbia Youth Population	564,836	570,054	586,327	597,995	902,300
Investigation					
RCCs Received	2,710	1,821	1,681	2,028	2,280
RCCs per 1,000 Youth Pop.	5	3	3	3	3
Crimes against property	408	210	194	233	264
Crimes against the person	1,059	865	964	1,169	1,198
Administration Of Justice	720	431	267	360	511
Other Categories	523	315	256	266	307
Accused	3,030	2,029	1,861	2,365	2,696
Accused In Custody	521	248	191	265	382
Charge Assessment					
Charge Assessment Decisions	3,015	2,023	1,858	2,350	2,664
Alt Measures	338	245	273	356	323
Approved to Court	1,976	1,197	1,091	1,314	1,565
No Charge	601	514	439	599	654
Returned to Agency	100	67	55	81	122
Prosecution					
Average Monthly Active Files	891	949	723	805	982
Concluded Prosecutions	2,062	1,528	1,280	1,265	1,644
% Files Concluded Early	73.0%	69.8%	70.4%	71.8%	77.5%
Median Days to Conclusion	120	224	194	176	174
File Outcomes					
Concluded Files by File Outcome	2,062	1,528	1,280	1,265	1,644
Guilty	1,115	690	615	604	775
Not Guilty	34	19	28	23	35
Other	14	6	12	8	12
Peace Bond	88	83	82	84	109
Stayed	811	730	543	546	713
<p>1. Source: JUSTIN database (extracted July 14, 2024)</p> <p>2. 'Youth' is defined as anyone aged 12-17, inclusive. Youth population data is reported per calendar year as of July 1 and released at the calendar year end. For the purpose of this table, the population under each fiscal year is based on the calendar year that most closely aligns (e.g., 2021/22 population is used to compare to 2022/23 data).</p>					

Table 11: Fiscal 2023/24 At a Glance

	RCCs Received	Charge Assessment Decisions					Time to Charge Assessment Decisions				
		Alt Measures	Approved to Court	No Charge	Returned to Agency	Total Decisions	< 1 Day	< 3 Days	< 7 Days	< 15 Days	< 30 Days
Vancouver Island Region											
Campbell River	746	8	637	105	18	768	36%	42%	54%	68%	82%
Colwood	1,173	31	955	193	34	1,213	49%	62%	75%	85%	91%
Courtenay	881	13	753	138	20	924	41%	48%	62%	77%	86%
Duncan	1,206	26	856	283	69	1,234	23%	27%	38%	51%	67%
Nanaimo	1,692	56	1,257	392	37	1,742	27%	33%	39%	52%	68%
Port Alberni	1,103	16	903	201	21	1,141	37%	43%	56%	70%	84%
Port Hardy	381	3	319	54	14	390	53%	61%	66%	77%	89%
Powell River	352	10	306	46	3	365	31%	41%	57%	75%	89%
Victoria	3,622	76	2,821	660	137	3,694	29%	32%	39%	51%	68%
Total	11,156	239	8,807	2,072	353	11,471	33%	39%	48%	62%	76%
Vancouver Region											
North Vancouver	1,429	62	966	371	55	1,454	26%	31%	41%	55%	71%
Richmond	1,180	40	949	172	59	1,220	42%	48%	56%	66%	75%
Sechelt	427	14	297	123	10	444	42%	53%	68%	78%	87%
Vancouver	9,123	211	6,797	1,708	413	9,129	49%	53%	60%	68%	76%
Total	12,159	327	9,009	2,374	537	12,247	45%	50%	58%	66%	76%
Fraser Region											
Abbotsford	2,493	22	2,156	329	70	2,577	51%	57%	67%	76%	86%
Chilliwack	1,916	10	1,491	286	87	1,874	40%	46%	54%	64%	75%
New West	825	15	732	97	13	857	49%	57%	64%	75%	85%
Port Coquitlam	2,494	96	1,948	474	67	2,585	33%	39%	51%	64%	76%
Surrey	6,223	79	5,243	919	204	6,445	48%	55%	66%	75%	83%
Total	13,951	222	11,570	2,105	441	14,338	45%	51%	62%	72%	82%
Interior Region											
Cranbrook	1,064	45	810	221	26	1,102	25%	29%	39%	52%	66%
Kamloops	1,833	23	1,262	553	51	1,889	42%	52%	68%	82%	89%
Kelowna	2,657	39	1,916	579	163	2,697	30%	35%	45%	55%	68%
Nelson	810	22	622	193	18	855	31%	35%	48%	64%	77%
Penticton	993	31	804	154	26	1,015	34%	43%	59%	72%	82%
Salmon Arm	489	20	371	100	8	499	21%	29%	40%	56%	73%
Vernon	1,101	26	889	182	37	1,134	45%	50%	61%	69%	79%
Total	8,947	206	6,674	1,982	329	9,191	34%	40%	52%	65%	76%
Northern Region											
Dawson Creek	661	9	500	143	26	678	25%	31%	41%	54%	68%
Fort Nelson	205	11	117	77	8	213	33%	44%	57%	73%	81%
Fort St John	938	14	807	142	24	987	40%	46%	57%	70%	81%
Prince George	2,415	51	2,030	339	92	2,512	47%	56%	69%	79%	85%
Prince Rupert	685	72	461	172	20	725	28%	33%	43%	53%	66%
Quesnel	621	21	520	79	22	642	34%	47%	59%	71%	80%
Smithers	590	29	379	175	14	597	26%	30%	37%	49%	62%
Terrace	718	29	537	143	25	734	36%	43%	56%	70%	82%
Vanderhoof	582	16	399	119	67	601	40%	48%	54%	68%	82%
Williams Lake	878	17	548	280	45	890	20%	23%	31%	41%	54%
Total	8,293	269	6,298	1,669	343	8,579	36%	43%	54%	65%	76%
CASP											
CASP	101	3	63	15	7	88	17%	18%	20%	22%	27%
Province											
Total	54,607	1,266	42,421	10,217	2,010	55,914	39%	45%	55%	66%	77%

1. Source: JUSTIN database (extracted July 14, 2024)
2. Vancouver includes Main Street, Downtown Community Court, Vancouver Youth Court, and Vancouver Supreme Court. New Westminster includes New Westminster Provincial Court and the New Westminster Supreme Court. CASP includes Special Prosecutions, Commercial Crime, Health Fraud, ICBC Fraud, Workers Compensation, and Welfare Fraud.

Statistical Overview

Table 12: Fiscal 2023/24 At a Glance

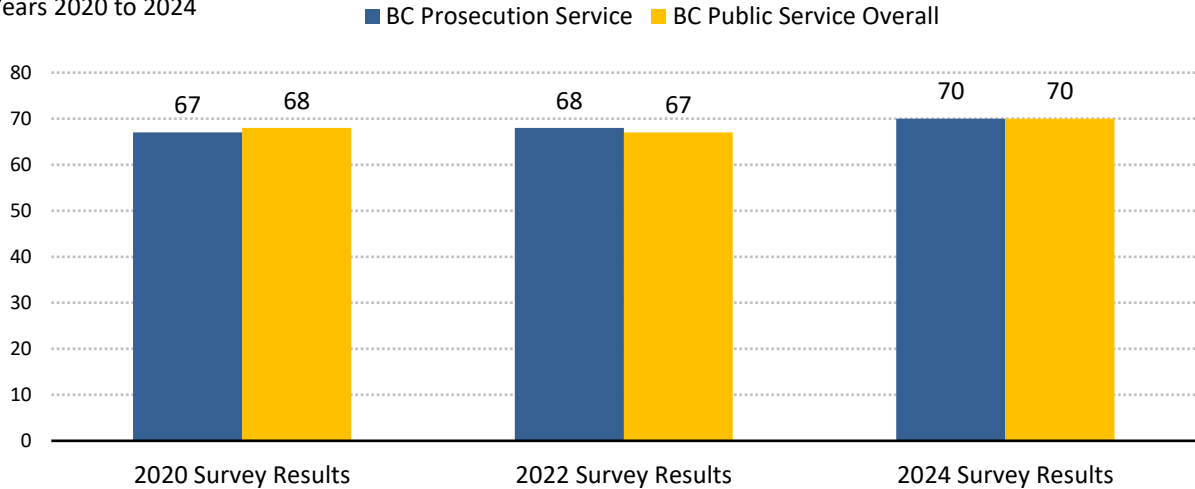
	Concluded Files	% Files Concluded Early	Median Days to Conclusion	Concluded Prosecutions by File Outcome									
				Guilty	Not Guilty	Other	Peace Bond	Stayed	% Guilty	% Not Guilty	% Other	% Peace Bond	% Stayed
Vancouver Island Region													
Campbell River	620	65%	167	413	10	23	24	150	67%	2%	4%	4%	24%
Colwood	902	74%	160	557	9	22	60	254	62%	1%	2%	7%	28%
Courtenay	715	73%	130	489	4	21	26	175	68%	1%	3%	4%	24%
Duncan	753	56%	220	340	11	24	36	342	45%	1%	3%	5%	45%
Nanaimo	1,331	74%	176	701	12	66	85	467	53%	1%	5%	6%	35%
Port Alberni	891	77%	112	477	11	20	36	347	54%	1%	2%	4%	39%
Port Hardy	282	65%	236	151	13	3	29	86	54%	5%	1%	10%	30%
Powell River	255	61%	182	138	10	3	14	90	54%	4%	1%	5%	35%
Victoria	2,664	70%	144	1,623	31	71	136	803	61%	1%	3%	5%	30%
Total	8,413	70%	156	4,889	111	253	446	2,714	58%	1%	3%	5%	32%
Vancouver Region													
North Vancouver	964	68%	166	480	9	20	58	397	50%	1%	2%	6%	41%
Richmond	846	72%	178	534	14	18	38	242	63%	2%	2%	4%	29%
Sechelt	243	73%	176	109	5	3	12	114	45%	2%	1%	5%	47%
Vancouver	5,927	83%	134	3,120	82	150	241	2,334	53%	1%	3%	4%	39%
Total	7,980	79%	146	4,243	110	191	349	3,087	53%	1%	2%	4%	39%
Fraser Region													
Abbotsford	1,692	82%	224	940	19	43	98	592	56%	1%	3%	6%	35%
Chilliwack	1,214	73%	238	600	18	33	90	473	49%	1%	3%	7%	39%
New West	673	86%	212	337	15	18	49	254	50%	2%	3%	7%	38%
Port Coquitlam	1,935	85%	173	934	21	44	165	771	48%	1%	2%	9%	40%
Surrey	5,199	80%	156	2,988	45	112	282	1,772	57%	1%	2%	5%	34%
Total	10,713	81%	182	5,799	118	250	684	3,862	54%	1%	2%	6%	36%
Interior Region													
Cranbrook	926	54%	216	484	25	50	49	318	52%	3%	5%	5%	34%
Kamloops	1,466	69%	146	953	35	29	66	383	65%	2%	2%	5%	26%
Kelowna	2,086	55%	204	1,228	20	69	119	650	59%	1%	3%	6%	31%
Nelson	573	68%	186	263	13	7	64	226	46%	2%	1%	11%	39%
Penticton	846	48%	240	461	7	28	64	286	54%	1%	3%	8%	34%
Salmon Arm	342	68%	142	188	4	8	25	117	55%	1%	2%	7%	34%
Vernon	1,000	61%	158	523	10	24	67	376	52%	1%	2%	7%	38%
Total	7,239	61%	176	4,100	114	215	454	2,356	57%	2%	3%	6%	33%
Northern Region													
Dawson Creek	656	66%	252	342	11	23	38	242	52%	2%	4%	6%	37%
Fort Nelson	179	57%	242	75	6	-	15	83	42%	3%	-	8%	46%
Fort St John	833	44%	155	537	5	24	45	222	64%	1%	3%	5%	27%
Prince George	1,981	59%	150	1,157	14	58	69	683	58%	1%	3%	3%	34%
Prince Rupert	555	80%	209	271	2	13	37	232	49%	0%	2%	7%	42%
Quesnel	494	54%	192	283	7	14	27	163	57%	1%	3%	5%	33%
Smithers	445	61%	230	257	5	6	40	137	58%	1%	1%	9%	31%
Terrace	525	49%	254	298	7	3	64	153	57%	1%	1%	12%	29%
Vanderhoof	417	63%	191	223	7	6	34	147	53%	2%	1%	8%	35%
Williams Lake	493	48%	188	223	13	6	39	212	45%	3%	1%	8%	43%
Total	6,578	58%	188	3,666	77	153	408	2,274	56%	1%	2%	6%	35%
CASP													
CASP	119	42%	392	71	10	2	-	36	60%	8%	2%	-	30%
Total	41,042	70%	170	22,768	540	1,064	2,341	14,329	55%	1%	3%	6%	35%

1. Source: JUSTIN database (extracted July 14, 2024)
 2. Vancouver includes Main Street, Downtown Community Court, Vancouver Youth Court, and Vancouver Supreme Court. New Westminster includes New Westminster Provincial Court and the New Westminster Supreme Court. CASP includes Special Prosecutions, Commercial Crime, Health Fraud, ICBC Fraud, Workers Compensation, and Welfare Fraud.
 3. A concluded prosecution is counted once for each accused person on a file that concluded in the fiscal year. If an accused person was on more than one file that concluded in the fiscal year, they are counted each time.

Figure 7: Workforce Engagement Score

Workforce Engagement Score (Survey Results)

Years 2020 to 2024



Source: Work Environment Survey, BC Stats

Note: The Work Environment Survey is commissioned by the BC Public Service Agency on behalf of the BC Public Service. A report is provided every other year. The 2024 report results were received in May 2024. The next report should be received in 2026. The overall engagement score is what is tracked for this KPI. The overall engagement score is an average of the scores for BC Public Service

Employees across government are surveyed every two years to gauge workplace health and employee engagement. The BC Prosecution Service uses the overall engagement score as one of its key performance indicators. This year our overall engagement score increased to 70, from 68 in 2022, continuing an upward trend over the past two surveys. Most WES drivers showed improvement, including stress and workload, which improved by 4 points, and pay and benefits, which increased by 6. Areas for improvement were staffing practices, stress and workload and tools and workspace.

Regional Profiles

The BCPS has approximately 530 Crown Counsel, 530 professional staff and 60 excluded managers (including Crown Counsel managers) located in communities across the province. Five regions conduct most prosecution functions at the local level: the Northern, Interior, Fraser, Vancouver, and Vancouver Island-Powell River Regions. Criminal Appeals and Special Prosecutions (CASP), which has a province-wide mandate, has offices in Vancouver and Victoria. Headquarters personnel are located in Victoria and Vancouver.

Headquarters

Headquarters is responsible for the BCPS business operations, legal operations, policy development, and strategic planning.



Business Operations

The Business Operations team leads the annual budget process, including submissions to Treasury Board and delegation of the annual budget at the regional level, and oversees expenditures. This includes developing and ensuring compliance with administrative policy. Business Operations provides provincial-level facilities management functions, human resources services, business continuity planning, security, and occupational health and safety programs. Business Operations is also responsible for the development and management of the BCPS technology-based applications and infrastructure, including major transformative initiatives and projects to support BCPS operations. This past year the operational support team for the DEMS application was established and capacity was added to support human resources initiatives, such as those enhancing recruitment and retention. Members of the team also manage data and business intelligence available from applications.

Policy and Justice Issues

The Policy and Justice Issues (PJI) team develops and implements legal policies, practices, protocols, and procedures to support the BCPS in fulfilling its mandate. Central to this is the publicly available [Crown Counsel Policy Manual](#), which provides both general and situation-specific guidance to Crown Counsel in the exercise of their discretion.

Members participate in intra-provincial and inter-provincial working groups and committees to recommend, develop, and implement criminal law reform. Crown Counsel in PJI also advise government on criminal law and related matters.

The PJI team oversees compliance with the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#), civil litigation involving the BCPS, and responses to correspondence received by the Minister and Deputy Minister regarding BCPS-related matters. The PJI team is responsible for the strategic management of the BCPS Indigenous Justice Framework.

BCPS Communications Crown Counsel

The Communications Counsel responds to media requests for information and prepares media releases and clear statements on the status and outcome of certain BCPS cases. The Communications Counsel briefs the ADAG on cases that may attract increased public scrutiny and liaises with government and police communications professionals, as well as special prosecutors, with respect to BCPS-related matters. As part of the Policy and Justice Issues team, the Communications Counsel is also involved in policy-related issues.

Legal Operations

The Legal Operations team collaborates with justice sector partners to identify and implement standardized provincial processes wherever appropriate to promote consistency and efficiency in the delivery of criminal justice services. They work with individual regions within the BCPS to identify challenges or implement solutions that may be unique to a region or local Crown Counsel office and work with justice sector partners on sector-wide initiatives like the British Columbia Provincial Court comprehensive bail program or the development or implementation of specialized courtrooms.

Vancouver Island-Powell River Region (Region 1)

Region 1 encompasses Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, the Outer Islands, and Powell River on the Sunshine Coast. There are 136 dedicated prosecutors and legal administrative professionals who work in nine offices, 15 court locations, and on dedicated teams, who receive RCCs from 30 police agencies and RCMP detachments.

Our personnel work with other justice system partners, community agencies, and Indigenous communities to provide prosecution services that are responsive to the local communities they serve. Region 1 works with local restorative justice agencies, which offer programs aimed at repairing the harm caused by crime and violence by addressing victims' needs, holding offenders meaningfully accountable for their actions, and engaging the community in the justice process.

Region 1 participates in the following specialized courts:

- **Duncan First Nations Court:** This court receives referrals of Indigenous offender files, mainly from the Cowichan area. The court focuses on balancing rehabilitation, accountability, and healing, recognizing the unique circumstances of Indigenous offenders within the framework of existing laws.
- **Intimate Partner Violence Courts, Nanaimo, and Duncan:** These courts are staffed by designated Crown Counsel who work with defence counsel and community agencies to engage resources that can assist victims and offenders. The approach seeks to reduce the traumatic impact of intimate partner violence with the goal of improving prospects for rehabilitation and victim safety.
- **Integrated Court, Victoria:** This court is staffed by a designated Crown Counsel who works with justice partners towards the goal of improving access to health, social, and economic services for mentally disordered and drug addicted chronic offenders, improving public safety, and holding offenders accountable for their actions in a timely manner.

We continue to support initiatives that provide justice access to isolated communities such as the addition of the Ahousaht circuit court location. At the invitation of the Ahousaht First Nation, the Provincial Court had its first sitting in Ahousaht on April 9th, 2024. The BC Provincial Court currently operates in the nearby communities of Tofino and Ucluelet. Some matters that would have historically been heard in those locations will now be heard in Ahousaht. The opening of the Ahousaht Court will improve access to justice for the Indigenous peoples in the community and surrounding areas.



Todd Inlet, photo by Kimberly Henders Miller

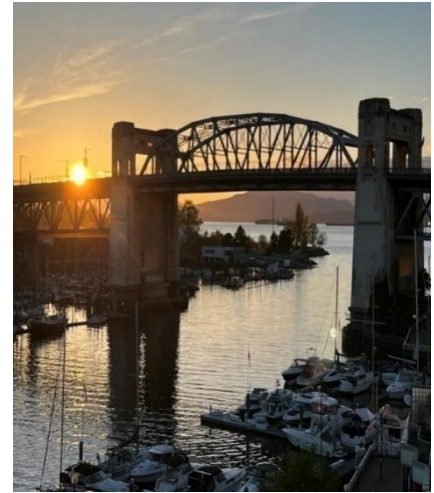
Did You Know?

- Region 1 acknowledges the lands and people of over 50 First Nations within our area, comprising three tribal Regions – Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw.
- Vancouver Island has about 3400 km of coastline. The island's Mountain range runs the length of the entire island, with the highest point being the summit of the Golden Hinde at 2,195m.
- Vancouver Island has the highest concentration of cougars in North America.
- Population served: 934,721
- Crown Counsel offices: 9
- FTEs: 131

Vancouver Region (Region 2)

The Vancouver Region has a diverse, multicultural population. It includes western areas of the Lower Mainland and the southern coast. Regional headquarters is in Vancouver.

The largest office in the Vancouver region is the Vancouver Provincial Court at 222 Main Street and the Downtown Community Court at 211 Gore Avenue. Many offenders in downtown Vancouver struggle with health and social problems, including addiction, homelessness, and poverty. Crown Counsel personnel at Downtown Community Court work together with justice partners, including health and social services, in one location and take a problem-solving approach to address offenders' needs and the underlying causes of criminal behaviour. Offences committed in Burnaby are also prosecuted at 222 Main Street.



Sunset over Burrard Street Bridge

Did You Know?

- Of British Columbia's six major metropolitan areas, Vancouver has the highest linguistic diversity
- Vancouver's Downtown Community Court is the first community court in Canada
- Population served: 1.55 million
- Crown Counsel offices: 7
- FTEs: 196

A separate Youth Court Office is located in the Robson Square Courthouse complex. Crown Counsel personnel based in Vancouver are responsible for prosecutions in the central coast communities of Bella Bella, Bella Coola, and Klemtu, and regularly travel to attend circuit court at these locations. The region's smallest office is in Sechelt and serves the communities of the Sunshine Coast.

In addition to dealing with cases arising in Richmond, the Richmond Crown Counsel Office prosecutes matters arising from the University Endowment Lands, including the University of British Columbia, and Vancouver International Airport (YVR).

The North Vancouver Crown Counsel Office serves a wide range of communities, including West Vancouver, Bowen Island, Lions Bay, Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton, and Mount Currie. It is also home to an Indigenous Justice Court which is working to assist in healing and rehabilitation and to reduce recidivism while acknowledging the harm done to victims and recognizing the needs of the local community.

Fraser Region (Region 3)

The Fraser Region is the most populous BCPS region and covers the geographic area from New Westminster on the west to Boston Bar on the east. Crown Counsel offices are located in the five communities where BC Supreme Courts and BC Provincial Courts are located, specifically New Westminster, Surrey, Port Coquitlam, Abbotsford and Chilliwack. The Fraser Region Crown Counsel offices serve a diverse population of approximately 1.8 million, including 30 First Nations, in both urban and rural communities. Approximately 250 Crown Counsel, paralegals and professional staff in the Region worked on roughly 14,000 new cases last year and participated in two specialized courts, First Nations Court in New Westminster Provincial Court and Intimate Partner Violence Court in Surrey Provincial Court.



Widgeon Creek, photo by Michelle Nikula

In the Fall of 2023, three BC Provincial Court bail “hub” courts were launched to service the needs of all Fraser Region communities. The Fraser Region staffs those daytime hybrid bail courts (counsel may attend in person or by MS Teams) located in Surrey, Port Coquitlam and Abbotsford. The Fraser Region also continues to staff bail courts on weekends, statutory holidays, and weekday evenings.

This past year was a busy one and included the commencement or conclusion of several large and complex prosecutions. Among the many new cases included the laying of first degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder charges against four men in connection with the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a matter that resulted in significant international media attention. An extremely talented and committed group of Crown Counsel, paralegals and professional staff had conduct of numerous other serious, complex and high profile prosecutions.

Did You Know?

- The Fraser Region works with numerous RCMP detachments and Municipal Police Services.
- The longest running Indigenous Court in British Columbia, New Westminster’s First Nations Court, is in its 18th year.
- Population served: 1.86 million
- Crown Counsel offices: 6
- FTEs: 241

Interior Region (Region 4)

The Interior Region comprises central and southeastern British Columbia, a large and diverse geographic area bounded by the US and Alberta, the Fraser canyon and Lillooet to the west and a northern boundary that peaks at Clearwater. Region 4 is located on the traditional territory of 40 diverse First Nations communities. The population also includes members of the Métis Nation.

Crown Counsel and professional staff in seven offices work with 47 detachments and 5 community policing outlets of the RCMP as well as a single municipal police force in Nelson to shepherd cases through 23 court locations, including 12 circuit courts.

BCPS Regional headquarters is in Kelowna, a growing urban centre with a rich agricultural industry including many vineyards. Lakeside highways connect Kelowna to the two other Okanagan Crown Counsel offices in Penticton (to the south) and Vernon (to the north). North of Vernon lies Salmon Arm, the Shuswap community that houses Region 4's smallest Crown Counsel office.

Did You Know?

- The Kamloops Crown office supports 3 of the 9 Indigenous courts in the province: Cknucwentn (Kamloops), Lillooet and Merritt.
- Kelowna is now home to the second largest RCMP Detachment in the country.
- Kelowna Integrated Court is one of three therapeutic courts in the province, offering wraparound services aimed at addressing the factors underlying recidivism.
- Population served: 830,509
- Crown Counsel offices: 7
- FTEs: 116



Circuit travel to Lillooet from Kamloops calls for a drive along this stunning mountain valley.



This former residential school is now a resort and cultural centre run by Ktunaxa Nation communities. "... since it was within the St. Eugene Mission School that the culture of the Kootenay Indian was taken away, it should be within the building it is returned." (Elder Mary Paul 1992-1991).

West of Salmon Arm is Kamloops, the Region's second largest city and Crown Counsel office, on the banks of the Thompson River. To the east, the Columbia Mountains are the gateway to the West and East Kootenays, with Crown offices in Nelson and Cranbrook respectively.

Two fire seasons on the heels of the fire that devastated Lytton, many other communities in the Interior saw unprecedented wildfire in 2023. Despite this, the criminal justice system carried on with minimal disruption thanks to the teamwork, courage and perseverance of our Region 4 colleagues and justice partners.

Northern Region (Region 5)

The Northern Region is approximately 544,000 kilometres in size and covers two-thirds of the province, a vast geographical area that stretches from the Yukon border in the north to 100 Mile House in the south, the Alberta border to the east, and Haida Gwaii to the west. With headquarters in Prince George, the region works in 10 offices, serving 35 court locations and receiving files from 36 RCMP detachments. The Northern Region has 25 circuit courts which serve our many remote communities. Crown Counsel and professional staff rely on electronic processes and virtual court appearances to assist in access to justice in these remote communities. Wi-Fi connectivity is improving in the communities, which assists greatly in providing resources in these court rooms.



gyaaGang (totem pole) raised at Hl'yaalang Gandlee (Tow Hill, Haida Gwaii), photo by Thomas Barnett

Did You Know?

- Region 5 works with RCMP detachments in Northern British Columbia and the Yukon
- The Northern Circuit (Atlin, Good Hope Lake, and Lower Post) is the longest circuit distance travelled: over 1900 km, and includes travel through the Yukon on the Alaska Hwy
- Many of the remote circuit courts are held in community halls or band offices, with limited or no cellular service or internet connectivity
- Population served: 340,391
- Crown Counsel offices: 10
- FTEs: 118

This Region has three Indigenous Courts, located in Prince George, Williams Lake, and Hazelton. Local Indigenous Elders participate in crafting rehabilitative sentences that recognize the unique circumstances of Indigenous offenders before the Court, while promoting rehabilitation, healing, and accountability. Working with Indigenous justice and local community partners, personnel in Region 5 actively engage in ongoing development of restorative justice programming throughout the Region/territory. Crown Counsel are exploring the use of remote testimonial accommodations to address the concerns of vulnerable witnesses particularly in very remote communities and continue to facilitate the provision of victim impact statements remotely.

The Northern Region is a vast, diverse part of the province

that responds to the unique challenges that the geography presents by having employees who are dedicated to their communities and to travelling to remote communities that we serve. Many of the Northern Region's offices are in Courthouse buildings that also house a variety of other government agencies, with Prince George being the Region's largest office. Prince George has an estimated population of 78,378. The Courthouse was completed in 1997 and houses the Prince George Crown Counsel as well as the Northern Region's Regional team. In addition to the Prince George files and the Prince George Indigenous Court, the office manages five circuit courts: MacKenzie, McBride, Valemount, Tsay Keh and Kwadacha. Tsay Keh and Kwadacha are remote indigenous communities which are generally accessed via limited charter flights and has court sittings three times per year.



Wildlife enroute to the Northern Circuit, photo by Jodi Michaels

Criminal Appeals and Special Prosecutions (CASP)

Serving the entire province, Criminal Appeals and Special Prosecutions carries out specialized roles including indictable appeals, major case management, prosecutions of commercial crime, occupational health and safety offences, regulatory and environmental offences, and police misconduct. CASP takes the lead on the Post-Conviction Review Committee of the BCPS, and is also responsible for Review Board hearings, Prosecution Support, and Legal Resources, Learning and Development. This year, we highlight just some of CASP's varied activities.

Did You Know?

- In 2023/24, the HROIP team documented over 2,500 notifications related to high-risk offenders.
- Many of the indictable appeals handled by Criminal Appeals are now publicly broadcast in real time over Zoom, with the links available from the Court Weekly Hearing List page on the BC Court of Appeal website.
- Crown Counsel offices: 5
- FTEs: 146

The **High-Risk Offender Identification Program (HROIP)** works with justice partners across Canada including police, corrections, and other prosecution services, to ensure pertinent information about over 14,000 high-risk offenders is available to assist prosecutors with decisions relating to judicial interim release, sentencing (including dangerous offender and long-term offender applications), and applications for preventative recognizances. New file intake for fiscal 2023/24 was 140. HROIP also supports the Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative (ReVOII). New file intake for ReVOII in fiscal 2023/24 was 406.

Coordinated by an Administrative Crown Counsel and legal assistant based out of CASP, the **Bilingual Prosecution Group** brings together approximately 20 prosecutors and professional

staff to deal with cases where an accused has requested a French or bilingual trial. Because of changes in the law and practice, the number of such trials has increased nine-fold in the last three years.

The **Legal Resources Learning & Development (LRLD)** introduced a Virtual Training Program for new Crown Counsel. An experiential learning element, now part of the annual Indigenous Cultural Safety program, resulted in its organizing Working Circle receiving a Ministry Excellence Award. The newly expanded team of LRLD Training Officers also travelled throughout the province to help implement the new Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS).

The **International Society for the Reform of Criminal Law** held its first in-person conference since the pandemic across the street from CASP's main Vancouver office. The cutting-edge topic was the Rule of Law and Artificial Intelligence. Members of the CASP team were part of the organizing committee, audio-visual support and featured as prominent speakers and participants – all with an eye to improving the ability of the BCPS to deal with cybercrime, new forms of evidence and other challenges that Generative AI is creating.



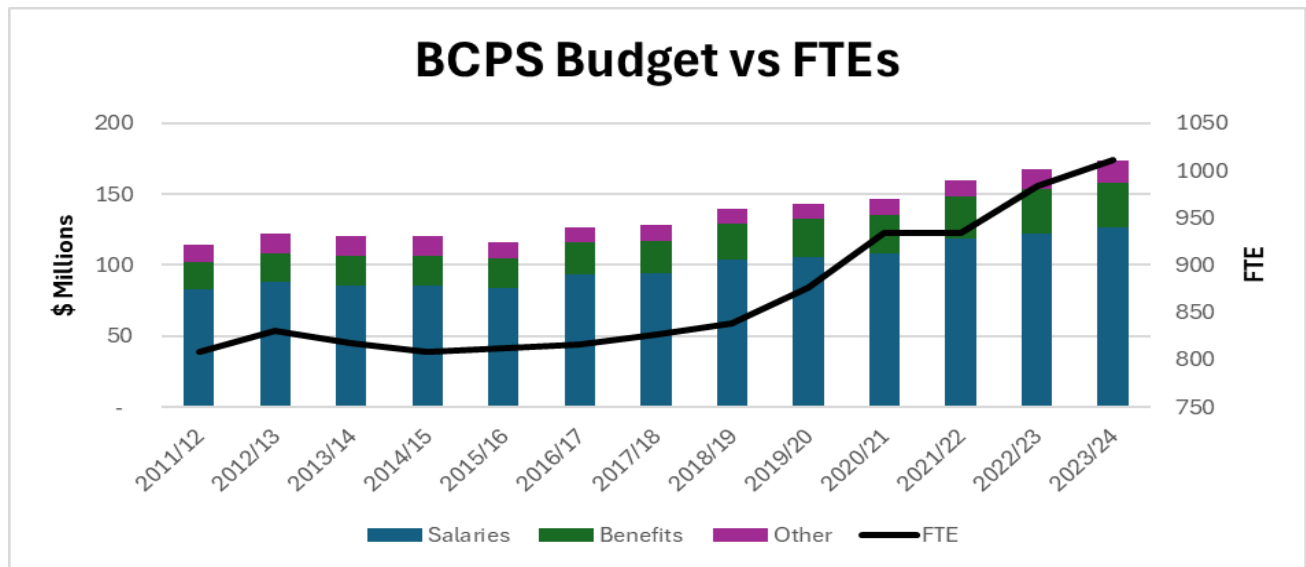
Louisa Winn KC at the ISRCL conference

Fiscal Year Financial Overview

The BCPS reported an estimates budget variance of \$3.403 million in fiscal 2023/24, due to Ministry-level adjustments and unfunded major case pressures, with the shortfall covered at the Ministry level. As a front-line operation, salary and benefits costs made up 92% of year-end expenditures. Base budget funding was provided to support the expansion of Crown Counsel responsibilities for bail and the Digital Evidence and Disclosure Management System.

Budget and Expenditures 2023/24	
Estimates Budget	\$173,671,000
Contingencies Vote	\$8,269,000
Total Authorized Budget	\$181,940,000
Expenditures	\$185,343,000
Variance	\$3,403,000

Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in both the BCPS budget and the number of employees, with the majority of the budget increase being directly attributable to negotiated salary increases for Crown Counsel. Since fiscal 2011/12 the BCPS estimates budget has increased by 86% and the number of delegated full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) has increased by 25%, reflecting the increased complexity and seriousness of the BCPS' caseload.



Awards and Achievements

- In 2023/24 four of our esteemed colleagues were appointed to the Provincial Court of British Columbia: Jeremy Hermanson in April 2023; Paul Sandhu in July 2023; Daniel Loucks in December 2023; and Sheryl Wagner in February 2024.
- In March 2024 Liliane Bantourakis was appointed to the Supreme Court of British Columbia.
- In May 2023 Brendan McCabe KC, Louise Kenworthy KC, Micah Rankin KC, and Clare Jennings KC were appointed King's Counsel for their leadership, professional accomplishments, and significant contributions to the legal profession and their wider communities.
- In November 2023, Crown Counsel Patrick Weir and Clare Jennings KC were honoured with the 2023 Courage and Perseverance Award by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Heads of Prosecution Committee. The award was presented to them in recognition of their steadfast commitment to bringing the R. v. Berry prosecution to a successful conclusion despite very challenging circumstances.

A number of BCPS individuals and teams were honoured with justice sector AG/PSSG 2024 Excellence Awards:

- Review Board Crown Office Professional Staff, Farrah LeCounte and Melissa Gaudette received a *Client Service* award;
- The Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative (ReVOII) team, which included Michael Fortino from the BCPS, as well as members from BC Corrections and Policing & Security, won in the *Collaboration* category;
- Louisa Winn, KC, was honoured with a *Diversity and Inclusion* award;
- The Sub-Committee on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (SEDI), also won a *Diversity and Inclusion* award;
 - Team members included: Alexander Burton, Michelle Clough, Deng Elijah, Fabiola Escobedo, Nadia Farinelli, Amanda Jiao, Peter Juk KC, Daphne Kvenich, Angela Lee, Angel Pedersen, Karen Penate de Moffatt, Lori Stevens, Astitwa Thapa, Megan Tilsner, Kaitlyn Tourangeau, Mallory Treddenick, Cindy Ward, and Louisa Winn KC.
- Professional staff member Nada Faraone was awarded in the *Spirit* category; and

- The Working Circle for the 2024 BCPS Indigenous Cultural Safety Gathering also won in the *Spirit* category.
 - Team members included: Jessica Patterson, Andrew MacDonald, Kim Wendel, Cindy Kinghorn, Emily Doucet, Nadia Farinelli, Garrett Hancott, James Henry, Jean-Benoit Deschamps, Kristyn Kaitila, Mark Sangret, Andrea Spence, Randy Robinson, Sabena Thompson, and Samuel Mann.

Forty BCPS personnel received Long Service Awards in 2023:

- Tim Stokes, Sharon Preston, Annie Martin, Scott Quendack, Craig Yamashiro, Tanya Shreenan, Ann Katrine Saettler, Christine Ballman, Marilyn MacLean, Laura Mayes, Seleena McCoshen, Joanne O'Reilly, Rita Kis, Jay Fogel, Farrah LeCounte, Kimberley Turnbull, John Caldwell, Alisia Adams, and Debra Granger completed 25 years of service;
- Curtis Johnson, Louise Krivel, Teresa Baptista, Julie Tillmanns, Lena Dal Santo, Lisa Lehouillier, Sharlein Smith, Michale Celio, Daniel McLaughlin, Riaz Bassari, and Jennifer Neid completed 30 years of service;
- Jacqueline Turner, Daniel Mulligan, Grant Wong, Julie Mathias, Liz Seward, Crystal Jeffery, Sandra Dworkin, Tammy Chatten, and Tina Sanders achieved 35 years of service; and,
- Wendy Dawson reached the 40 years of service milestone.

BC Prosecution Service Awards

Each year the BCPS presents awards in three categories: Crown Counsel Leadership; Professional Staff Leadership; and Crown Counsel Recognition. Our 2023/24 award recipients were:

Crown Counsel Leadership Awards

- Haydn Shook – Vancouver Island-Powell River Region
- Joanna Ferguson – Fraser Region
- Monica Fras – Interior Region
- Jodi Michaels – Northern Region
- Rusty Antonuk – CASP
- Janet Dickie – Headquarters

Professional Staff Leadership Awards

- Kathleen Bethell – Vancouver Island-Powell River Region
- Desmond Cheung – Vancouver Region
- Annie Martin – Fraser Region
- Robin Batchelor – Interior Region
- Ashley Beeson – Northern Region
- Amy Millar – CASP
- Gemma Hansen – Headquarters

Crown Counsel Recognition Awards

- Tim Morgan – Vancouver Island-Powell River Region
- Isobel Keeley & Daniel Porte – Vancouver Region
- Aaron Burns – Fraser Region
- Anthony Varesi – Interior Region
- Kathryn Costain – Northern Region
- Michelle Booker – CASP



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