



British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner

Budget submission

2026/27 – 2028/29

**Submitted to the Select Standing Committee on
Finance and Government Services**

Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

October 2, 2025

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OCTOBER 2025

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ISBN: 978-1-990626-20-3

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British Columbia's
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Commissioner**

**To the Indigenous peoples of this
place we now call British Columbia:
Today we turn our minds to you and
to your ancestors. You have kept
your lands strong. We are grateful to
live and work here.**



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Introduction

B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner was established through the *Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2018* (Bill 50) and is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in British Columbia (B.C.). Commissioner Kasari Govender was first appointed in May 2019 and reappointed for a second five-year term in September 2024. The Human Rights Commissioner's legislative mandate is to promote and protect human rights through several tools provided under the *Human Rights Code*. The Commissioner's work is supported by 43 FTEs including herself. Five of these positions are Schedule A, the remaining positions follow the Management Classification and Compensation Framework.

Summary of the budget proposal

Overview

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC) continues to maintain the highest standard of accountability as trustees of public resources.

In October 2023, BCOHRC presented its three-year budget for the period 2024/25 – 2026/27 to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the Committee) for consideration. At that time, the Committee recommended operating budgets of \$7.668 million for 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27, as well as \$35,000 in capital for each of the three years. In May 2025, the Committee recommended supplementary funding up to \$188,050 for operating expenditures in 2025/26 for inflationary expenditures and the Commissioner's salary and benefits. This brought BCOHRC's operating budget for 2025/26 up to \$7.856 million.

BCOHRC is requesting a 2026/27 operating budget of \$8.03 million, followed by an operating budget of \$8.19 million in 2027/28 and \$8.36 million in 2028/29.

Specifically for 2026/27, BCOHRC requests a two per cent increase for salaries, benefits, and select operating costs including travel, office and business expenses and professional services contracts. We have used the most recent consumer price index to guide our salary increases as the collective agreement is still not finalized. We are not requesting any increase for amortization or grants. In 2027/28 and 2028/29, we are requesting an additional two per cent per year plus an increase for the Commissioner based on her employment contract.

Key assumptions

BCOHRC has made key assumptions that inform its budget request. They include:

The expected collective agreement salary increase will not exceed two per cent. Salary increases in the final collective agreement beyond this will create funding pressures as salary increases across government are applied equally among Schedule A and Management Classification positions.

BCOHRC will continue to be able to find efficiencies, absorb some funding pressures and effectively risk manage the following funding shortfalls:

- BCOHRC experiences budget pressure when there is a full complement of approved staff (43 FTEs including the Commissioner). BCOHRC continues to manage this ongoing pressure through human resources attrition and associated hiring lags and cost savings.
- While other independent offices of the Legislature (offices) received funding for an employee retention plan, BCOHRC was not approved for funding for its retention plan in 2022. We choose to implement the plan anyway in order to retain our highly qualified staff and absorb the associated costs. Our supplemental salary costs for maternity and parental leave exceeds our budget allocation by 16 per cent despite only requesting a two per cent increase.

Significant changes in the past year

No significant changes of note.

Finding efficiencies and savings

Facing significant budget pressures in information systems, BCOHRC has taken the following steps to find efficiencies and cost savings: moving to cloud-based storage at significant savings; reducing the number of cell phones in use; reducing the number of computers on hand; and reducing the cost and services for cell phones in use.

Improved budget literacy across the organization, including the delegation of budget responsibilities, has resulted in efficiencies as decision making is now happening by those best positioned to find savings in each expenditure.

BCOHRC has invested in increasing its staff resources over more expensive external contracted resources, which is both cost effective and sustainable to BCOHRC.

Explanation of any requests beyond prior year approvals

Operating costs inflation

BCOHRC is requesting an increase to our operating budget due to inflation. The practice of all statutory offices, including BCOHRC, has been to incorporate wage inflation requests in budget request cycles based on the best information available at the time. Since we have not been able to confirm inflation rates for future years, we have typically not included inflation in the requests for future years if the collective agreement is being negotiated. Since a new collective agreement is not yet finalized, our request this year is based on an estimating wage inflation in the future using the consumer price index as a guide. As applicable, we also apply similar inflation measure increases to select operating costs. BCOHRC is not requesting an increase to the capital budget.

STOB analysis of 2026/27 budget proposal

The table below outlines each expense category where an increase is requested. For additional details, please refer to the financial reporting template.

STOB	DESCRIPTION	CHANGE	EXPLANATION
50-51	Base salaries, supplemental costs	2%	Increase is based on the consumer price index. It is an estimate pending the outcome of collective agreement negotiations.
52	Employee benefits	3%	This increase reflects an inflationary increase (two per cent) plus an adjustment to 26 per cent (previously 25.4 per cent) for benefits in anticipation of a benefit increase expected in early 2026, consistent with the approach taken by all the offices.
54	Legislative salaries	2%	Based on the Commissioner's employment contract.
57	Public servant travel	2%	Increase is based on the consumer price index.
60	Professional services	2%	Increase is based on the consumer price index.
63	Information systems - Operating	2%	Increase is based on the consumer price index.
65	Office and business expenses	2%	Increase is based on the consumer price index.
67	Informational advertising and publications	2%	Increase is based on the consumer price index.
75	Building occupancy costs	2%	Increase is based on the consumer price index.

Statutory officer benefits

The Commissioners benefits total \$106,000, including a car allowance. These benefits are included in the budget request under Employee Benefits (STOB 52).

Base salaries explanation

Salaries (STOB 50-51) accounts for \$4.51 million of the budget in 2026/27. The increase over the prior year, due to wage inflation, is \$89,000 or two per cent. The Committee previously declined to fund in-band increases associated with an employee retention plan in 2022, as noted above. Therefore, we have not requested additional funding for in-band increases. BCOHRC would welcome an invitation to include in-band increases in our request because we continue to provide in-band increases and it creates funding pressure. Retention of our highly qualified staff team is a priority, in part because regular turn over in staff ends up costing us more than offering more competitive salaries.

STOB analysis of previous year's actuals

The following table outlines variances of five per cent or more in each expense category. For more details, please refer to the financial reporting template.

STOB	DESCRIPTION	VARIANCE	EXPLANATION
50	Base salaries	22%	Corporate Shared Services funding was in STOB 85 but was moved here when these services were moved internal to BCOHRC. BCOHRC also decreased reliance on contractors and moved some funding here.
51	Supplementary salary costs	16%	Higher than anticipated maternity and parental leaves.
52	Employee benefits	21%	Consistent with increases to base salaries (STOB 50).
54	Legislative salaries and indemnities	9%	The Commissioner's salary is set by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and outside BCOHRC's control.
57	Public servant travel	-5%	Savings were used to support budget pressures in other STOBs.
60	Professional services	-24%	We moved away from a reliance on contractors in favour of staff positions adding to our internal and long-term capacity.

63	Information systems - Operating	14%	Funding pressures are coming from increased cost of B.C. government services. We are actively managing these costs down in 2025/26.
65	Office and business expenses	-16%	Optimized expenses to fund information systems pressures.
67	Informational advertising and publications	-95%	This year's public campaign did not involve externally paid advertising. Savings were used to risk manage other funding pressures.
73	Amortization	-19%	Funding moved to support budget pressures in other STOBs.
77	Grants	-54%	Grants are only given if funding is available. Funding is used to support budget pressures in other STOBs.
85	Other expenses - Corporate Shared Services	-88%	Corporate Shared Services funding was in STOB 85 and moved to Salaries and Benefits (STOBs 50-52).
85	Recoveries within government	-100%	This is a -\$1,000 placeholder.
88	Recoveries external within the GRE	-100%	This is a -\$1,000 placeholder.
89 and 90	Recoveries - external to GRE	-100%	This is a -\$1,000 placeholder.



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