



British Columbia's  
Office of the Human Rights  
Commissioner

# Budget submission

2025/26 – 2027/28

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

Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

April 1, 2025

# Budget submission

## 2025/26 – 2027/28

**APRIL 2025**

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**Office of the Human Rights  
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**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 unceded homelands 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). 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.

## Summary of the Supplementary Funding Request for 2025/26

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 addition to this committee's budget recommendation of \$7,668,000 operating and \$35,000 capital (from its last report), the Human Rights Commissioner is requesting an additional \$249,000 in fiscal 2025/26 to a total of \$7.917 million in operating.<sup>1</sup> This represents a three per cent increase from the previously recommended 2025/26 operating budget to accommodate inflation (two per cent) and Commissioner compensation (one per cent).

In addition to applying inflationary measures to wages, BCOHRC is applying inflation costs to some key operational costs in the next three fiscal years (2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28) based on associated increases in the cost of goods and services, lessons learned in its financial assessment and to be more consistent with other statutory offices.

BCOHRC found internal efficiencies where possible by realigning operating costs to business needs, which is referred to as STOB realignment. The STOB realignment reflects the transfer of some of BCOHRC's existing operating costs to wages to support salary cost pressures as well as to establish its own Corporate Services Department after the close of its shared corporate services agreement with the Representative for Children and Youth.

In formulating this supplementary budget request, BCOHRC thoroughly considered risks and challenges such as capacity, impact and relevance associated with its scope of mandate and jurisdiction, its new five-year strategic priorities and commitment to continued fiscal prudence.

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1 Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, *Annual Review of the Budgets of Statutory Offices: 2024-25 to 2026-27*, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Dec. 13, 2023, 22, [https://www.leg.bc.ca/committee-content/4499/FGS\\_SO-Report\\_42-4-3rdReport\\_2023-12-13.pdf](https://www.leg.bc.ca/committee-content/4499/FGS_SO-Report_42-4-3rdReport_2023-12-13.pdf).

# Key requests

The requests for supplementary funding are as follows.

## Operating costs 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. This request for wage inflation is recurring dependent on the broader public service wage inflation direction. Based on a two per cent inflation measure, an additional **\$136,000** in compensation is being requested for BCOHRC's 2025/26 budget. This request is consistent with other independent offices.

Additionally, inflationary measures of two per cent are being applied to key operating items such as supplementary salary costs, travel, professional contracts, business expenses, advertising and information systems to sufficiently cover inflationary costs. This is a recurring request for **\$45,000** to align with anticipated inflationary costs.

The implications of not approving the inflationary requests for all the operating costs include:

- challenges recruiting and retaining staff based on a reduced ability to provide competitive wages
- reduced ability to manage rising operating costs caused by inflation, which negatively impacts BCOHRC's ability to meet its operational and statutory obligations

## Commissioner compensation

As you know, Commissioner Govender's reappointment was unanimously recommended by an all-party legislative committee, which was unanimously adopted by the Legislative Assembly. A new compensation package was confirmed as part of Commissioner Kasari Govender's reappointment employment contract in September 2024. This is at a cost of an additional **\$68,000** for salary and benefits. The Commissioner's compensation package is outside the control of the Commissioner and the Office as it is set by the Lieutenant Governor in Council pursuant to s. 47.04(1) of the *Human Rights Code*. If this request is not granted, the implication is significant cost pressure on BCOHRC to maintain optimal operations with its relatively small budget.

## Projection of 2024/25 actual spending

BCOHRC will spend 100 per cent of its stated 2024/25 budget:

Cost Centre	2024/25 budget	2024/25 actual	Variance
Salaries and benefits	\$4,664,000	\$5,638,399	21%
Other operating costs	\$3,004,000	\$2,029,601	-32%
<b>Total operating costs</b>	<b>\$7,668,000</b>	<b>\$7,668,000</b>	<b>0%</b>
Capital costs	\$35,000	\$0	100%

# 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
51	Supplementary salary costs	-75%	Fewer maternity/parental leaves in 2023/24; however, will be fully expended in 2024/25.
57	Travel	-38%	Vacancies in leadership positions, as well increased remote/virtual meetings reduced travel costs.
60	Professional services	-32%	BCOHRC chose to underspend to increase funds available for grants given the nature of the expertise required.
65	Office/business expenses	-38%	Being understaffed for a significant period lowered business expenses overall.
67	Informational advertising/publications	-85%	Reallocated amount used to fund grants (as per identified surplus).
69	Utilities	-78%	This variance is immaterial as budget is \$1,000.
73	Amortization	-16%	Some of the furniture purchased is now fully amortized.
77	Grants	4,611%	\$236,000 spent on specialized research projects and building community capacity.
88-90	Recoveries (internal and external)	-100%	Variance is immaterial as budget is -\$3,000. This is a placeholder to allow BCOHRC to recover if needed.





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