



British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner

Holding the line

Annual Report 2024/25 and Service Plan 2025/26–2027/28

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Annual Report 2024/25 and Service Plan 2025/26–2027/28

September 2025

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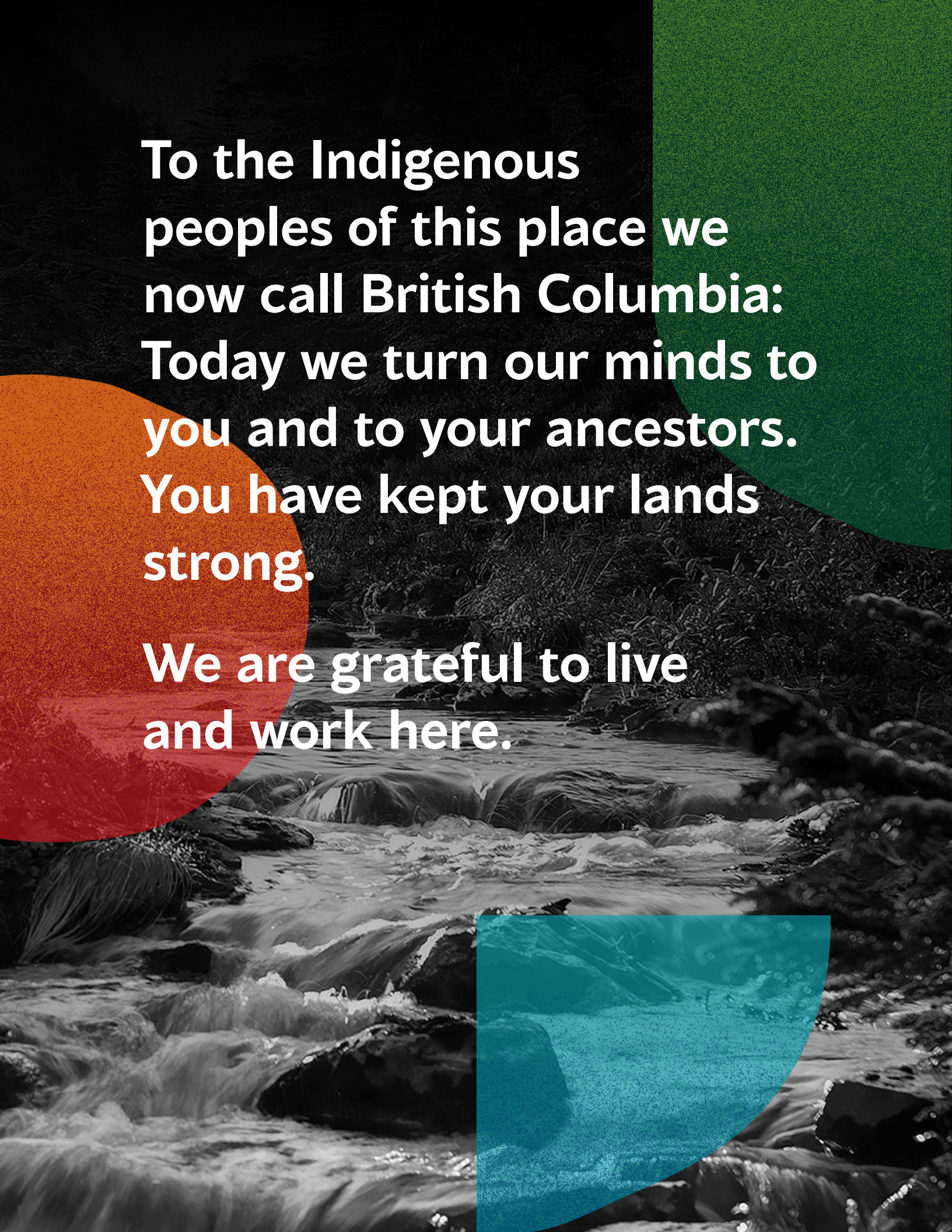
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Service Plan 2025/26–2027/28



British Columbia's
**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 lands
strong.**

**We are grateful to live
and work here.**

September 2025

The Honourable Raj Chouhan
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker,

It is my pleasure to present BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner's Annual Report 2024/25 and Service Plan 2025/26–2027/28 to the Legislative Assembly.

This document reports on the period from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, and highlights activities underway and planned for April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2028. It has been prepared in accordance with section 47.23(1) of the *Human Rights Code*.

Sincerely,



Kasari Govender
B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner
Province of British Columbia

cc: Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

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If you are unsure about terminology used in this report, we invite you to visit our Human Rights Glossary at: bchumanrights.ca/glossary



Message from the Commissioner

As my first term as B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner came to a close this past year, I reflect on what we have achieved together for human rights over the last five years. I look to the addition of Indigenous identity to the *Human Rights Code*, the prevention of further legislation eroding the rights of people who are homeless, the ability of policy makers to rely on the impact of the Anti-Racism Data Act for evidence-based decision making, the ending of detaining law-abiding migrants in provincial jails and the strengthening of criminal justice responses to hate among many other accomplishments. All of this has an impact on the lives of people in B.C. I'm proud of having done this work amidst establishing a brand new office during a global pandemic.

Each year brings new challenges and opportunities. This year, as human rights defenders, we held the line. Globally, we saw a surge of authoritarianism and fascism. Around the world and closer to home, we saw a growing politicization of human rights issues, despite their enshrinement in law. In this context, our role as a human rights organization has become, at least in part, one of holding our ground against the erosion of human rights and principles of democracy that we may have taken for granted not so long ago.

Despite the legal protections afforded for those who rely on guide dogs to navigate life, I hear so often of a daily denial of those rights on the bus, in taxis, in restaurants and even stores. This is an example where clear legal protections aren't enough to stop the erosion of their rights. That's why this year we worked with guide and service dog users to help educate duty holders about their obligations to accommodate users and their dogs. The law exists to protect the rights of people with disabilities in this context; what has been lacking is awareness and rights literacy. To this end, we worked with the taxi industry and the hospitality industry to hear what drivers and restaurant servers needed to better understand their obligations,



and we worked with guide and service dog users to better understand their experiences in using or being excluded from these services. We produced brief accessible guidance posters for taxis and host stations, stickers and a short first-person video. We are looking forward to expanding this work into other industries. We realize that holding the line takes many forms, in this instance it is education and awareness.

Sometimes the law isn't enough to protect vulnerable people. A part of my role is to identify where gaps in the law allow the human rights of people in B.C. to disappear from view, and to recommend the changes needed to strengthen protections. This year, we wrapped up our inquiry into how designated agencies (mostly health authorities) have been using the *Adult Guardianship Act* (AGA) to detain vulnerable people who seem to be abused or neglected, sometimes for long periods of time. We learned that people with disabilities—and seniors—are disproportionately impacted by the AGA. While the intent of protecting vulnerable adults is laudable and important, transparency about how agencies are exercising these powers is vital for upholding the rule of law and ensuring accountability to human rights standards. Our goal in this inquiry was to shine a light on how this regime operates and to ensure that, when the state exercises extraordinary powers that interfere with an adult's liberty, that exercise of power accords with human rights laws and standards. I made 10 recommendations to strengthen the AGA and its implementation, which were welcomed by the Attorney General.

We also joined human rights defenders around North America who are trying to stand firm on the ground that has been won over recent decades to build more equitable, diverse and inclusive (EDI) workplaces, including through hiring practices that give preference to populations who are traditionally underrepresented in employment, despite significant threats to these policies. To hold where we stand firmly, we produced a resource to address common misconceptions about equity practices when hiring. It builds on BCOHRC's employment equity toolkit, which was created to support employers wanting to learn how to improve equity within their businesses and organizations. It dispels myths and stereotypes about these programs and illustrates how preferential hiring will build stronger workplaces. In a landscape where mis- and disinformation is a loud cacophony, accurate information from a credible source is a powerful salve.

In this current human rights climate, we must learn to take nothing for granted. To fulfill my mandate to promote and protect human rights in this province, BCOHRC must be vigilant in holding the line against discrimination and hate in all of our systems. We must not be scared to push forward, despite the significant undertow that threatens to undo many of the human rights gains many movements have made.

Alongside the people living in British Columbia, I can see that we need to not only envision a B.C. free of barriers but one where every person has the opportunity to thrive and realize their goals. We must all gather our courage to hold strong against the encroachment of our human rights and for a more just and equitable future. The more people we have holding the line, the stronger we will be.

Sincerely,



Kasari Govender

B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner

2024/25 year at a glance

Released a series of Community Briefs that provide a snapshot of human rights issues in four B.C. communities: Cranbrook, Chilliwack, Chetwynd and Terrace.

The Anti-Racism Act is tabled in the B.C. Legislature, building on the Anti-Racism Data Act, which implemented many of the Commissioner's recommendations from her 2020 report, Disaggregated Demographic Data Collection in British Columbia: The Grandmother Perspective.

Apr 2024

Launched the From Hate to Hope immersive exhibit in Vancouver, Kelowna, Fort St. John and Nanaimo to encourage reflection and action against the rise of hate that was documented in the Commissioner's Inquiry into hate in the pandemic.

May 2024

Kasari Govender reappointed to a second five-year term as B.C.'s first independent Human Rights Commissioner.

Issued a statement supporting the right to peaceful and lawful assembly and free expression in response to protest encampments on B.C. campuses.

Intervened in British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) on behalf of Chilliwack Teachers' Association v Neufeld before the BC Human Rights Tribunal involving allegations of hate speech and discriminatory speech published on the internet.

Jul 2024

Released Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C., a report that takes a focused look at 10 key systems impacting human rights in British Columbia.

Published a new resource to share answers to frequently asked questions on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) hiring practices.

Aug 2024

Decision issued by the BC Human Rights Tribunal in British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) on behalf of Chilliwack Teachers' Association v. Neufeld, affirming its ability to hear cases about allegations of online hate speech.

Released new educational resources to help workers in the restaurant and taxi industries understand their responsibilities to people who use guide dogs and service dogs.

Sep 2024

Launched Beyond the Headlines, a livestream series that features conversations with leaders and change makers, the first being with the Federal Housing Advocate.

Nov 2024

Launched the second phase of free online educational sessions on systemic discrimination, called Systemic Discrimination: What We Can Do.

Relaunched bchumanrights.ca with accessible design as its foundation

Launched the Commissioner's Book Club with monthly book selections for adults and preschool-aged children that can ignite conversations around human rights issues.

Dec 2024

Feb 2025

Released our newest I Love my Human Rights video featuring accessibility advocate and guide dog user Georgia Pike.

Issued a letter to Ministers of Education and Child Care and Public Safety and Solicitor General regarding school police liaison officers and the termination of the School District 61 School Board.

By the numbers



1,180

media stories
about our work



19,000

downloads of BCOHRC resources
including our hate speech Q&A



173,600

visits to our website



17,000

social media followers

159

recommendations to provincial public bodies issued over 2019 - 2024. Progress was made on 58 per cent, with 11 per cent being fully implemented and 47 per cent partially implemented or in progress



67%

people in British Columbia say B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner is effective at raising and addressing human rights issues



5

immersive From Hate to Hope exhibits in areas across B.C., hosting more than 450 attendees



26

educational sessions offered to the public about B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* and human rights issues, reaching 2,000+ people

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

Our vision

A province free from inequality, discrimination and injustice where we uphold human rights for all and fulfil our responsibilities to one another.

Our mandate

To address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. We do this work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring.

Our role

B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* states that the Commissioner is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in B.C. In the course of fulfilling this mandate, the Commissioner can do the following:

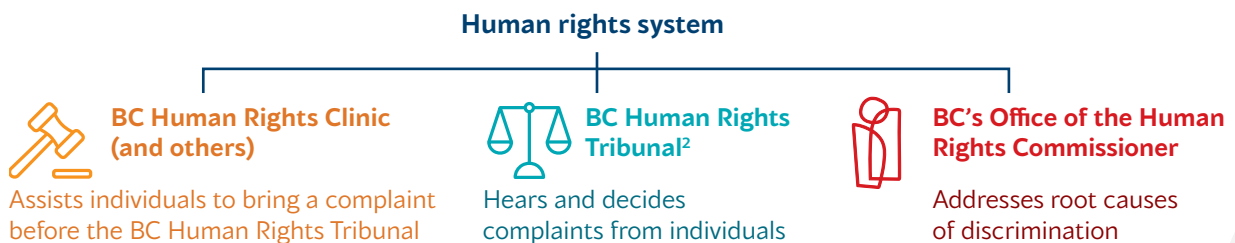
- identify and promote the elimination of discriminatory practices, policies and programs
- develop, deliver and support research and education about human rights
- create policies, guidelines and recommendations to prevent discrimination
- promote compliance with international human rights obligations
- approve special programs to improve conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups
- intervene in human rights proceedings before the BC Human Rights Tribunal or other courts and tribunals
- assist complainants in human rights proceedings, as appropriate, to create systemic change
- conduct human rights inquiries and issue reports and recommendations
- make special reports to the Legislative Assembly about human rights in B.C.
- inquire into matters referred to B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner by the Legislative Assembly

B.C.'s human rights system

B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* prohibits discrimination based on personal characteristics, such as race, sex, religion, gender identity and disability; these are also known as “protected grounds”¹ in these areas of daily life: housing, employment, services, publications and membership in unions and associations.

Our Office has broad powers to address systemic discrimination in all areas covered by the *Code* and to take action to prevent human rights violations more generally in the province. BCOHRC is also charged with promoting compliance with international human rights obligations.

Our Office is one part of a three-part system of human rights protection and oversight in our province.



Our approach

Guiding principles

We are guided by the following principles, both inside and outside the organization:

- We operate on the basis of **nothing about us without us**, and we centre the perspectives and rights of those most marginalized and those whose rights are at stake.
- We take a **decolonizing** approach to all our work and recognize that human rights can be held by individuals or groups.
- We understand that all of us have **intersectional** identities and experience discrimination and privilege in diverse ways.
- We believe that the protection and promotion of human rights is essential to a functioning **democracy** and are committed to a vision of democracy in which the rights of the majority do not trample upon the rights of those in the minority.
- When engaging with community, we **move at the speed of trust**.
- The urgency of **climate change** — and the important relationship between the natural environment and human rights — guides us in the work we do.
- Entrenched problems require **bold actions**. Acting boldly means taking risks, and sometimes we will make mistakes.
- We are **strategic and proactive** in creating change, and balance immediacy with sustainability.
- **Accessibility** of information, space and services is essential to the realization of human rights. Our work will be designed for a range of abilities, cultures, languages, education levels, learning styles and viewpoints.
- In all our relationships, we strive to be **trauma-informed** and **culturally safe**.

¹ Please visit our website for a full list of Code-protected grounds.

² If you belong to a union and have experienced discrimination at work, you may want to talk to your union. Unions can help employees file grievances about human rights issues.

Human rights-based approach

We ground our work in a human rights-based approach, which includes the following principles:

- indivisibility, inalienability and universality of rights
- intersectional equality and non-discrimination
- meaningful participation, inclusion and empowerment
- transparency and accountability
- rule of law

Decolonizing approach

Decolonization is the dismantling of the process by which one nation asserts and establishes its domination and control over other nations' land, people and culture. Decolonization is central to human rights work. The approach requires we recognize both collective and individual rights and responsibilities. It applies the four 'R's for building respectful relationships: reciprocity, reflexivity, responsibility and relevance.³ Principles include:

- equality and non-discrimination
- listening, learning and honouring Indigenous world views, including the value of reciprocity and working in relationship
- self-reflecting as a mechanism to expose systems of bias
- recognizing and addressing intergenerational trauma as a direct result of colonization
- recognizing and supporting self-determination
- dismantling or transforming laws and institutions designed to oppress Indigenous peoples and Indigenous ways of knowing and being
- restoring a respectful relationship to land

³ These criteria are adaptations of the four key principles (known as the 4Rs) for participating in Indigenous research—respect, reciprocity, relevance and responsibility—as initially described in 1991 by V.J. Kirkness & R. Barnhardt, “First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R’s—Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility,” *Journal of American Indian Education*, 30(3), 1991, pp. 1-15.

2024/25 strategic priority highlights

Reimagining Human Rights in B.C., our five-year strategic plan for 2020/21 to 2024/25, has been the roadmap for the Office's efforts to support and advance human rights across B.C.

Our six strategic priority areas are:



Discrimination under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*



Decolonization



Hate and the rise of white supremacy



Poverty as a cause and effect of inequality and injustice



Human rights **protections for those being detained** by the state



Creating a **strong and sustainable organization**

Discrimination under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*

A key reason that BCOHRC exists is to ensure that the rights guaranteed by B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* are protected and respected. We all have the right to be free from discrimination in employment and housing, when accessing services and in union membership. Under the *Code*, we are protected from discrimination on the basis of a number of grounds, such as gender, race, Indigenous identity and disability.

2024/25 highlights

- launched [Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C.](#), a report that takes a focused look at 10 key systems impacting human rights in British Columbia. The report highlights significant inequities and injustices affecting B.C. residents, providing a crucial tool to understand the current state of human rights in our province and a kind of baseline to monitor change over time ([page 28](#))
- published [equity, diversity and inclusion \(EDI\) hiring practices Q and A](#) to provide clear, factual information that empowers people living in British Columbia to have constructive conversations about EDI and guidance on inclusive hiring practices. It offers definitions of key terms, clarifies how EDI works, describes some of the measures it includes in the workplace and explains some of the related legal issues ([page 45](#))
- released [educational resources](#) to help workers in the restaurant and taxi industries understand their responsibilities to people who use guide dogs and service dogs. The resources now available include infographics, posters, stickers and meeting guides, among other things ([page 45](#))
- released the newest [I Love my Human Rights video](#) and companion discussion guides featuring accessibility advocate and guide dog user Georgia Pike. The “I love my human rights” video tells her story, the discrimination she and others have faced and her hopes as an accessibility advocate ([page 45](#))
- launched the second phase of our free online educational sessions on systemic discrimination, [Systemic Discrimination: What We Can Do](#). The session builds on the foundations of the original Introduction to Systemic Discrimination webinar to provide learners with a more action-oriented look at the issue ([page 42](#))



By the numbers

- For the first time in many years, ethnicity (31%) was the most common ground of discrimination in complaints made to the BC Human Rights Tribunal in 2023/24. This was followed by disability (29%); sex (11%); family and marital status (9%), age (5%) and religion (5%).⁴
- More than one-in-ten people in British Columbia personally experienced discrimination based on a characteristic protected by the B.C. *Human Rights Code* in the last year. At least one in four people in British Columbia know someone who experienced discrimination based on mental disability, race, colour, body size or sexual orientation in the last year alone.⁵
- Almost half of people in British Columbia who personally experienced or know someone who experienced discrimination in the past year say it happened at work.⁶

⁴ BC Human Rights Tribunal, “2023/24 Annual Report” (BC Human Rights Tribunal, 2024), 26. <https://www.bchrt.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/876/2024/09/2023-2024.pdf>.

⁵ Polling based on an online study conducted by Research Co. on behalf of BCOHRC from March 29 to 31, 2025, among 816 adults in British Columbia, which is a representative sample.

⁶ Ibid.



FEATURE

Resources for those who serve guide dog users

We all have human rights. This includes the right to access services like restaurants and cafés without experiencing discrimination. This right is protected under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* and includes people with disabilities who use guide dogs and service dogs.

Despite this, it is not unusual for BCOHRC to hear from someone who uses a guide dog that they have been denied access to a taxi, a store or a restaurant.

Georgia is usually accompanied by her guide dog Maggie. Like many guide dog and service dog users, Georgia experienced discrimination when trying to access services in British Columbia. In 2019, Georgia made a successful human rights complaint to the BC Human Rights Tribunal regarding discrimination she faced in a Vancouver café: the owner told her to leave several times because she was accompanied by her guide dog.

"Repeatedly explaining that I have a right to access public spaces, just as anyone else, is exhausting. I advocate for the right to exist in my community because there is a lack of education about human rights," shares Georgia Pike.

Another story BCOHRC heard was of a guide dog user who was released from hospital and required a taxi to transport her home. A taxi was ordered by a nurse, but the driver refused the woman service because of her guide dog, despite this being illegal.

"Everyone in B.C has a right to be free from discrimination in accessing services such as restaurants, cafés and taxis. However, my Office has heard too many accounts of guide and service dog users being treated poorly and even denied access to these services. These experiences can be embarrassing, stressful, isolating and sometimes even dangerous."

- Commissioner Kasari Govender





To help raise awareness about this issue, our Office worked with guide dog and service dog users as well as people working in the restaurant and taxi industries to create educational resources. BCOHRC staff met with restaurant and taxi industry workers and representatives to determine what resources would best help them understand guide dog and service dog users' rights and how to navigate issues that may arise. The resulting materials aim to help workers in those industries provide excellent, accessible customer service and meet their legal responsibilities under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*.

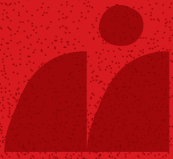
“Having resources to help hospitality providers identify and accommodate service dog users will have a huge impact on our industry. Restaurant operators have health inspectors on one side saying, “dogs aren’t permitted” and people using service dogs on the other side of them saying, “my dog must be permitted.” Training for their staff and clear understanding of the rules will be a huge help. The hospitality industry wants to do the right thing, but often doesn’t know quite what the right thing is.”

*- Gillian MacGregor, Human Resources Specialist,
British Columbia’s Restaurant and Foodservices Association*

Being aware of the rights of people who use service and guide dogs is important to preventing discrimination against people with disabilities in our province. We want to support people working in the service industries by providing tools and clear information on human rights. By listening to both the needs of guide and service dog users and to the perspectives of servers and drivers, our Office has created practical, easy-to-use resources. Education is key to ensuring compliance with B.C.’s *Human Rights Code*—and ultimately to creating a more equitable world for all.

“Ensuring guide dog and service dog users have access to transportation and that drivers feel confident in their knowledge of how to accommodate guide dog and service dog users is of utmost importance. That is why it is so valuable to have these resources to educate drivers on human rights laws and how it impacts their work. The educational materials offer clear information on the rights of guide dog and service dog users and will help drivers provide professional and equitable service for all customers.”

- Mohan Kang, President, B.C. Taxi Association



Decolonization

Historical and ongoing colonialism, including the dispossession of lands, has a devastating impact on Indigenous people and communities. Our Office is committed to supporting self-determination of Nations by listening deeply to Indigenous Peoples. We work to change and improve structures that impede the full, equal and just participation of Indigenous Peoples in all aspects of economic, social, cultural and political life.

2024/25 highlights

- intervened in *Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS) v. R.R.* In 2025, the B.C. Court of Appeal decided to uphold the BC Human Rights Tribunal's jurisdiction to make decisions about discrimination in cases relating to child welfare services ([page 21](#))
- intervened in *Gitxaala Nation v. Chief Gold Commissioner of B.C. et al. and Ehattesaht First Nation v. His Majesty the King in right of B.C. et al.* at the B.C. Court of Appeal. The Commissioner argued that the incorporation of *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) into B.C. law through the *Declaration Act* means that the articles of UNDRIP must be given legal effect in B.C. ([page 20](#))
- piloted a B.C. *Human Rights Code* workshop specifically intended for Indigenous people in B.C. The workshop was presented twice to youth audiences to a total of more than 50 people. This workshop follows on the 2021 addition of Indigenous identity as a [protected ground against discrimination](#) in B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* ([page 41](#))
- made submissions to support the advancement of international human rights, including a submission to the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples study on "Indigenous Peoples' right to data, including data collection and disaggregation" ([page 48](#))
- facilitated three workshops on disaggregated demographic data as a powerful tool for change through the use of the Grandmother Perspective framework. From the Commissioner's *Disaggregated Demographic Data Collection in British Columbia: The Grandmother Perspective* report, the Grandmother Perspective offers guidance for how to collect and use disaggregated demographic data in a way that minimizes the risk of harm and furthers the aim of addressing and ending systemic inequalities ([page 47](#))
- continued monitoring the implementation of an [agreement between Maxwell Johnson, the Vancouver Police Board \(VPB\) and the Heiltsuk Nation](#), issued an [interim report](#) in early 2024
- continued Commissioner Govender's commitment to meaningful engagement and relationship with Indigenous communities and leaders across the province, speaking with the First Nations Leadership Council, First Nations Justice Council and First Nations Summit ([page 41](#))



By the numbers

- The child welfare system (children and youth in care or CYIC) continues to disproportionately affect children who come from marginalized families, particularly those who are Indigenous, experiencing poverty or living with disabilities.⁷ Despite making up only 10 per cent of the population, 68 per cent of CYIC are Indigenous.⁸
- The 2023 point-in-time homeless count conducted in 27 B.C. communities identified 11,352 people experiencing homelessness, an increase of 31 per cent from the 2020/21 count. Of these people, 40 per cent identified as Indigenous, despite Indigenous people making up only six per cent of the population.⁹
- Disaggregated demographic data on poverty exposes the effects of systemic discrimination on marginalized groups. While an unacceptable one in eight children in B.C. live in poverty, rates are far higher among Indigenous and racialized children, affecting one in three on rural reserves.¹⁰

⁷ Fallon, Barbara, Rachael Lefebvre, Nico Trocmé, Kenn Richard, Sonia Hélie, H. Monty Montgomery, Marlyn Bennett, Nicolette Joh-Carnella, Marie Saint-Girons, Joanne Filippelli, Bruce MacLaurin, Tara Black, Tonino Esposito, Bryn King, Delphine Collin-Vézina, Rachelle Dallaire, Richard Gray, Judy Levi, Martin Orr, Tara Petti, Shelley Thomas Prokop, & Shannon Soop. *Denouncing the Continued Overrepresentation of First Nations Children in Canadian Child Welfare: Findings from the First Nations/Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect – 2019*. Ontario: Assembly of First Nations, 2019, 8-9, https://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/FNCIS-2019%20-%20Denouncing%20the%20Continued%20Overrepresentation%20of%20First%20Nations%20Children%20in%20Canadian%20Child%20Welfare%20-%20Final_1%20%282%29.pdf.

⁸ “Performance Indicators: Services to Children in Need of Protection,” Ministry of Child and Family Development, accessed June 25, 2024, <https://mcf.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/child-protection/services-to-children-in-need-of-protection/performance-indicators>; “Indigenous identity population by gender and age: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions, Table 98-10-0293-01,” Statistics Canada, last updated November 15, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810029301>.

⁹ Homelessness Services Association of BC, James Caspersen, Stephen D’Souza, and Dustin Lupick, *Report on Homeless Counts in BC: 2023* (BC Housing, 2024), 49, <https://www.bchousing.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2023-BC-Homeless-Counts.pdf>.

¹⁰ First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society, 2022 BC Child Poverty Report Card (First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society, 2023), https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/BC-Report-Card-First_Call-2022_Feb_14_web.pdf.



FEATURE

Interventions

This past year, the Commissioner intervened in three cases that have the potential to improve the human rights of Indigenous people in B.C.

The Commissioner can apply to intervene in court cases that have the potential to make a significant impact on human rights across B.C. She does not represent or advocate for either side in a case. But an intervention can impact how the law evolves, making it an important tool in systemic work to promote and protect human rights.

A test of the *Declaration Act*

The first two cases, which were heard together, asked the court to consider B.C.'s *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA or *Declaration Act*) in the mineral claims context.

Gitxaala Nation v. Chief Gold Commissioner of B.C. et al. and *Ehattlesaht First Nation v. His Majesty the King in right of B.C. et al.* have the potential to set important precedents about the rights of First Nations in B.C., including whether the *Declaration Act* establishes enforceable rights.

Both Gitxaala Nation and Ehattlesaht First Nation have filed legal challenges to B.C.'s *Mineral Tenure Act*. Their legal challenges concerned the process used by the Government of B.C. to grant mineral claims on territories over which the Nations claim rights and title. Currently, mineral claims are granted via an online system. This process does not include consultation with First Nations who have asserted rights and title over the territory where the claim is staked. Both First Nations sought a judicial review of this process and certain mineral claims granted through it. The *Declaration Act* was passed into law in 2019 and affirms the application of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) to the laws of British Columbia. B.C.'s *Declaration Act* is historic legislation, critical to decolonization and reconciliation in the province.

The Nations argued, amongst other things, that the *Declaration Act* provides a legal right for First Nations to be consulted before claims are granted. The cases were heard by the B.C. Supreme Court from 2022 to 2023. The Commissioner was granted intervenor status and during the court case her intervention argued that the *Declaration Act* is legally enforceable legislation and should be interpreted as quasi-constitutional human rights legislation.

The Court released its decision on the cases, in which it found that the *Declaration Act* does not implement UNDRIP in B.C. or create rights for Indigenous peoples that can be litigated. The Commissioner expressed disappointment at the decision. The Gitxaala Nation and Ehattlesaht First Nation appealed the B.C. Supreme Court's decision.

The Commissioner applied for leave to intervene in these appeals, was granted intervenor status and, in early 2025, argued that the incorporation of UNDRIP into B.C. law through the *Declaration Act* means that the articles of UNDRIP must be given legal effect in B.C. and courts must be able to hear cases about them. The court has not yet made its decision about the appeal.

Discrimination in matters affecting child protection

In 2023, B.C.'s Supreme Court granted the Commissioner leave to intervene in *Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS) v. R.R.* This case involves whether the BC Human Rights Tribunal may make decisions about discrimination in matters concerning child protection.

The BC Human Rights Tribunal had found that VACFSS discriminated against R.R., a mother whose children were apprehended by VACFSS. VACFSS applied to B.C.'s Supreme Court for judicial review, arguing that the Tribunal made several errors, including overstepping its jurisdiction.

The Commissioner's intervention looked at how to properly interpret the scope of the Tribunal's jurisdiction relating to child welfare services. The Commissioner argued that limiting the Tribunal's jurisdiction in this area can negatively impact vulnerable people who are subject to involvement with child welfare services.

The Supreme Court issued its decision on Jan. 22, 2024. On the jurisdictional issue, the Court affirmed that the Tribunal is able to adjudicate human rights complaints arising out of matters relating to child protection. However, the Court also found that "stereotypical reasoning and escalating assertions of power and control" in the determination of whether a child is at risk are not sufficient to ground a successful human rights complaint in child protection cases. Specifically, this applies to situations where such risk assessments are made in good faith and in accordance with the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*. The Supreme Court sent the case back to the Tribunal for reconsideration with this finding in mind.

R.R. and VACFSS both appealed the B.C. Supreme Court's 2024 decision to the B.C. Court of Appeal. Further Tribunal proceedings were paused while the appeal was determined. The Commissioner was granted intervenor status in the appeal and made an argument supporting the BC Human Rights Tribunal's jurisdiction to address cases about discrimination in child protection services in B.C.

In May 2025, the B.C. Court of Appeal issued a decision that upholds the BC Human Rights Tribunal's jurisdiction to make decisions about discrimination in cases relating to child welfare services. The Commissioner welcomed the decision.

"It is essential that people experiencing discrimination in the child welfare system can rely on the Human Rights Tribunal to fully consider and address discriminatory conduct and enforce their Human Rights Code-protected rights. I am pleased to see this confirmation that stereotypes have no place in child protection decisions."

— Commissioner Kasari Govender



Hate and the rise of white supremacy

Combating hate in all its forms—from hateful speech to hateful violence—requires addressing fear and ignorance through a variety of mechanisms for social change. We are committed to engaging in activities that build empathy, curiosity and connection across difference, while using the Commissioner’s powers to issue orders, make recommendations, advocate for changes to law, policy and practice, and advance public inquiries to meaningfully redress incidents of racism and hate.

2024/25 highlights

- recognized the passing of the *Anti-Racism Act* (ARA), anti-racism legislation in B.C., following extensive consultation with BCOHRC. The ARA builds on the *Anti-Racism Data Act* (ARDA), which implemented many of the Commissioner’s recommendations from her 2020 report, [Disaggregated Demographic Data Collection in British Columbia: The Grandmother Perspective](#)
- launched an immersive audio-visual exhibit that allows visitors to step inside the stories of the people impacted by hate in our province. The From Hate to Hope exhibit provides an immersive experience of the rise of hate that was documented in the Commissioner’s [Inquiry into hate in the pandemic and the large-scale works of art that emerged from it across B.C.](#) (page 25)
- produced [From Hate to Hope colouring book](#) in eleven languages and featuring images from the [From Hate to Hope report](#) and [murals](#). The book is designed for use by children, contains introductory text explaining the Commissioner’s inquiry, the development of the mural project, and the importance of art in creating understanding and social change
- released a [statement](#) in reaction to protest encampments arising on B.C. campuses, standing with the UN that speaking out about atrocities in Gaza or the actions of the state of Israel must be allowed, that campus communities have the right to peaceful and lawful assembly and free expression, and that there is no place for antisemitism, anti-Palestinian racism or Islamophobia
- intervened in a [case](#) before the BC Human Rights Tribunal, [British Columbia Teachers’ Federation \(BCTF\) on behalf of Chilliwack Teachers’ Association v. Neufeld](#), involving allegations of hate speech and discriminatory speech published on the internet. The Commissioner argued that the Tribunal has jurisdiction over hate and discriminatory speech published online. Soon after, the Tribunal issued a decision affirming its ability to hear cases about allegations of online hate speech (page 49)
- launched a new [Commissioner’s Book Club](#) to foster conversations and build deeper understanding of human rights issues through the power of stories. The book selections for adults and young children were first released in December 2024 and on a monthly basis afterwards (page 40)
- updated our [Hate Speech Q and A](#), a popular question and answer resource that is part of our mandate to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. The Hate Speech Q and A webpage was viewed 39,000 during the Commissioner’s first five years (page 45)



By the numbers

- Hate in B.C. rose significantly over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and again in response to local and global events.¹¹ For example, the violence in Gaza has led to a rise in discrimination against Palestinian, Jewish and Muslim people.¹² We can measure these jumps in hate incidents in part through police-reported hate crimes, which more than doubled between 2017 and 2022.¹³
- 62 per cent of LGBTQ2SAI+ students across Canada report that they feel unsafe at school (compared with 11 per cent of cis-hetero students). Feeling unsafe is reported at even higher rates for trans students, where 76% report feeling unsafe at school.¹⁴
- False or misleading information plays a central role in propagating hate and silencing people, especially online. In 2023, 59 per cent of Canadians said they were very or extremely concerned about misinformation online and 43 per cent said it was getting harder to identify misinformation compared with three years earlier.¹⁵

¹¹ British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. From Hate to Hope: Report of the Inquiry into Hate in the COVID-19 Pandemic. British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, 27-29, 2023. https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCOHR_C_Hate-in-the-pandemic.pdf.

¹² British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. "Statement: Human Rights Commissioner calls for action to counter rising antisemitism and Islamophobia," British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, November 6, 2023, <https://bchumanrights.ca/news/statement-human-rights-commissioner-calls-for-action-to-counter-rising-antisemitism-and-islamophobia/>.

¹³ "Police-reported hate crime, by type of motivation, selected regions and Canada (selected police services) Table 35-10-0066-01," Statistics Canada, last updated March 13, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=3510006601>.

¹⁴ Peter, T., Campbell, C.P., & Taylor, C., *Still in Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the Second Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* (Egale, 2021), https://indd.adobe.com/view/publication/3836f91b-2db1-405b-80cc-b683cc863907/2098/publication-web-resources/pdf/Climate_Survey_-_Still_Every_Class_In_Every_School.pdf.

¹⁵ "Concerns with Misinformation Online, 2023," Statistics Canada, December 20, 2023. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231220/dq231220b-eng.htm>.





FEATURE

From Hate to Hope—Immersive exhibit

Communities are strong when they are rooted in connection and hope. Our Office's ongoing work to implement the recommendations of the [Inquiry into Hate in the Pandemic](#) is focused on connecting people and translating the Inquiry's findings and recommendations into meaningful change at all levels. As the pandemic's shadow fades but hate persists, it's more important than ever to foster collaboration and encourage creative approaches to change.

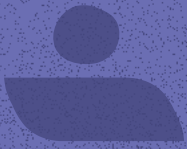
That's why, this past year, our Office launched an [audio-visual exhibit](#) that allows visitors to step inside the stories of the people impacted by hate in our province. The From Hate to Hope exhibit provides an immersive experience of the rise of hate that was documented in the Commissioner's Inquiry into hate in the pandemic and the large-scale works of art that emerged from it across B.C.

The 25-minute experience weaves together animation, projections, interviews and soundscapes to allow people to reflect on their own experiences and actions being taken to address hate in their communities. The immersive exhibit travelled to four parts of B.C. in 2024/25: Vancouver, Kelowna, Fort St. John and Nanaimo. The exhibit continues its tour with a stop in Victoria in late 2025.

The exhibit amplifies the voices represented in the Inquiry and builds upon the artistic contributions of [public murals that were unveiled in 2023 in Vancouver, Fort St. John, Keremeos and Nanaimo](#). The murals represent a step forward in helping community members process their experiences of hate, inspire connections that can fortify the community against disinformation and fear, and catalyse conversations about how to create change in our province.

By providing opportunities for people to engage with the From Hate to Hope report findings, our Office hopes to create a sense of connection by seeing our experiences reflected in this work or develop a greater understanding by hearing another person's story.

The [From Hate to Hope: Report of the Inquiry into Hate in the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) was released in March 2023 and contained 12 multifaceted recommendations to four ministries and the head of the BC Public Service. Out of the 37 recommendations and sub-recommendations made in the report, one was fully implemented, 22 were partially implemented or in progress and 14 were not implemented. The Commissioner continues to call for the implementation of her remaining recommendations to advance substantive equality in the province.



Poverty as a cause and effect of inequality and injustice

Women, gender diverse people, Indigenous people, people with disabilities, seniors and people of colour are more likely to live in poverty.¹⁶ B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* continues to fail to protect people from discrimination based on poverty or social condition. Since 2021, we have been calling for social condition to be added as a protected ground in the *Code*. We are committed to working towards effective protections for economic rights, engaging with poverty as a human rights issue and dismantling discrimination against people living in poverty.

2024/25 highlights

- launched *Beyond the Headlines*, a series of conversations hosted by the Human Rights Commissioner with leaders and change makers about key issues facing people in British Columbia. Commissioner Govender sat down with Federal Housing Advocate Marie-Josée Houle for a candid conversation about navigating the housing crisis while keeping human rights in focus
- carried out an inquiry into restrictions placed on media by the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) during an April 2023 decampment in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). The inquiry aims to determine the details surrounding the restriction of media in the DTES during this time and will seek to understand whether such a restriction is in accordance with human rights law and principles (page 51)
- issued a letter jointly with the Federal Housing Advocate to Canada's Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, and B.C.'s Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs calling for local governments to take a human rights-based approach to addressing homelessness, including through specific and actionable plans (page 40)
- expanded our plain language resources to simplify B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*. The online materials cover topics such as employment, housing and now new guidance on services. The resources provide clear explanation to help employers, workers, landlords, tenants, service providers and service users understand human rights protections (page 46)

¹⁶ City of Vancouver Social Policy and Projects Research and Data Team. *Populations Disproportionately Impacted by COVID-19* (City of Vancouver, January 2021), p. iii. <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/pdi-covid-current-state-report-january-2021.pdf>.



By the numbers

- While an unacceptable one in eight B.C. children lives in poverty, rates are far higher among Indigenous and racialized children, reaching one in three on rural reserves.¹⁷ In addition, children in single mother families experience poverty at a much higher rate (28.2 per cent) than children in couple families (7.9 per cent), illustrating the intimate connection between child poverty and women's poverty.¹⁸
- Despite British Columbia's wealth, about one in nine residents — nearly 600,000 people — lives in poverty.¹⁹
- There is a significant gap between the minimum wage and a living wage. In 2023, the minimum wage was \$16.75 and living wages across the province ranged from \$20.64 in Dawson Creek to \$26.51 in Clayoquot Sound.²⁰

¹⁷ First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society, *2022 BC Child Poverty Report Card* (First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society, 2023), https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/BC-Report-Card-First_Call-2022_Feb_14_web.pdf.

¹⁸ "Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type, Table: 11-10-0135-01 (formerly CANSIM 206-0041)," Statistics Canada, last modified April 26, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110013501&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.13&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2021&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2022&referencePeriods=20210101%2C20220101>.

¹⁹ "Poverty and low-income statistics by selected demographic characteristics, Table 11-10-0093-01," Statistics Canada, accessed May 16, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1110009301>.

²⁰ "Living Wage Calculation 2023," Living Wage for Families Campaign, Living Wage BC, accessed July 2, 2024, <https://www.livingwageforfamilies.ca/livingwagecalculations2023>. Note that the living wage does rely on the market basket measure in its calculations, they are different measures. See the technical appendix and calculation spreadsheet for details: <https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/working-living-wage-0>.



FEATURE

Rights in focus: Lived realities in B.C.

We cannot act on what we don't know. This is why Commissioner Govender undertook research to identify 10 key systems impacting human rights in British Columbia. The landmark [Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C.](#) report highlights significant inequities and injustices affecting B.C. residents, providing a crucial tool to understand the current state of human rights in our province and a baseline to monitor change over time.

The systems selected for the report are those that most impact B.C. residents' social, economic and political lives. They are:

The right to housing: B.C. residents face the highest rate of unaffordable housing in Canada. As a result, homelessness and encampments are on the rise: the 2023 homeless count identified 31 per cent more people experiencing homelessness when compared with 2020/21.

The right to an adequate standard of living: About one in nine B.C. residents lives in poverty. Moreover, after years of decline, the poverty rate rose from 7.6 per cent in 2020 to 11.6 per cent in 2022.

The right to education: In B.C., there are large differences between groups in educational outcomes. 92 per cent of all students complete secondary school in six years, but only 78 per cent of students with disabilities, and 75 per cent of Indigenous students.

The right to fair treatment in employment: One in 10 respondents to a poll conducted for our Office reported experiencing discrimination based on their identity when applying for a job in B.C. This is consistent with other research that shows that people from marginalized identity groups are less likely to be employed, work in secure jobs or hold managerial roles and they earn less for their work.





The right to health: Many people lack access to basic care, including 17 per cent who are without a regular health care provider. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the toxic drug crisis have placed unprecedented additional demands on an already stretched health care system.

The right to fair treatment in public spaces: One in five Canadians, including 29 per cent of racialized people, have experienced some form of hate, harassment or violence online. Hate incidents rose dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic, and again in response to recent violence in Gaza. This rise is reflected in police-reported hate crimes, but also in the many incidents not reported to police.

The right to fair treatment in criminal justice: Indigenous and racialized people, as well as people with mental health or substance use disorders, are at severely increased risk of interactions with the criminal justice system. For example, on any given day in 2023, about 1,829 individuals were in B.C. correctional centres and over one-third (662) of them identified as Indigenous.

The right to fair treatment in the family sphere: Regardless of employment status, women spend more time than men on childcare and household chores. This additional domestic burden is compounded by lower pay in the workforce, together increasing economic vulnerability and making it hard to leave abusive relationships.

The right to fair treatment by the child welfare system: The number of children and youth in care (CYIC) has decreased in recent years, but the child welfare system disproportionately affects children from marginalized families, particularly those who are Indigenous, experiencing poverty or living with disabilities. For example, despite making up only 10 per cent of the population, 68 per cent of CYIC are Indigenous.

All human rights depend on a clean, healthy and sustainable environment: The harm falls disproportionately on marginalized people, who have contributed least to the crisis and whose rights are already least secure. This was evident in recent years as unprecedented flooding, heat waves, and wildfires destroyed biodiversity, lives and property across the province.



SPOTLIGHT

“I don’t look the way they want me to”

Many, if not all, of the systems in the Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C. report interact or have a relationship to poverty or social condition. What follows is the report’s spotlight on inequities in the social safety net.

Discrimination on the basis of social condition is pervasive, damaging and well-documented. To better understand how people experience such discrimination, we surveyed B.C. service providers, connected directly with people living in poverty and attended roundtable discussions hosted by the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition (PRC). The stories we heard echo the many voices represented in secondary research that articulate “real and specific sources of disadvantage” related to social condition.

The disadvantages of poor social condition are wide-ranging, including both interpersonal and systemic discrimination. For example, some research participants reported being denied services because they appeared poor, or receiving services accompanied by increased surveillance and suspicion:

“...a lot of times people will look at, like, how you dress, you know, if ... you have no income or whatnot, usually you dress pretty shabbily, maybe in slightly dirty stuff ... and they’ll just look at that and immediately judge whether they’re going to give that service to you or not.”

One participant, a transit driver, noted that “people from shelters or who look homeless are shunned by the public and sometimes kicked off buses by drivers.” Other research from the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) describes how even essential needs, such as the need for life-saving medical care, may be minimized or ignored when recipients appear poor.

We also heard numerous examples of systemic discrimination on the basis of poverty or class. Research participants noted that sometimes mail delivery and waste management services were denied to Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. In addition, research from Pivot Legal Society has shown that some people experiencing homelessness in the Downtown Eastside have their shelters and valued personal belongings routinely destroyed in “street sweeps.”

We heard that discrimination entrenches conditions of poverty. For example, respondents to our survey explained how some employers screen out job applicants whose postal codes indicate they live in low-income neighbourhoods. One research participant with the CCAP explained how the way someone looks can quickly inform prejudicial judgments about social condition:



“So, I’m sitting at this table speaking of equity when the joke’s on me because as soon as my voice is spoken, they disregard it because of the shape of my teeth. And that is classism, because the way it really trickles down is, do you have teeth or not? You know, so I’m walking into all these interviews, not accepted because I don’t have teeth, not because I’m not actually good at the organizing piece or not because I know the actual education either, just simply because I don’t look the way they want me to. When I walk in there, they want me to look like they do.”

Various government consultations have also affirmed that the stigma of experiencing poverty is distinct from other forms of discrimination. For example, during a 2018 consultation on poverty, the Government of B.C. heard “how hard it is to not only have to deal with the effects of poverty on a daily basis, but to also have to deal with the stigma of being impoverished.” Similarly, in 2023, participants in engagements on B.C.’s poverty reduction strategy highlighted the difficult reality of discrimination on the basis of social condition. Participants in a PRC roundtable we attended explained how such discrimination makes it difficult to secure their rights:

“Even when the facts are on our side, stigma isn’t...”

We also heard how the absence of protection for social condition under the B.C. *Human Rights Code* leaves people vulnerable to exploitation. One participant in a PRC roundtable observed:

“Social conditions are not protected. We have to cobble together arguments based on assumptions about marginalized folks. Protection needs to be there so folks could launch complaints. We need advocacy for social condition to be included in the Human Rights Code.”

This call echoes a decades old appeal to prohibit discrimination on the basis of social condition under the B.C. *Human Rights Code*. In making this recommendation in 1998, the former B.C. Human Rights Commission cited the following observation.

“People who live in poverty are subject to widespread systemic discrimination. These people are routinely denied housing and access to services and they are reviled in popular culture as being morally inferior. People who live in poverty are not even on the political agenda. They are marginalized to the point of invisibility. This is precisely the kind of societal disadvantage and exclusion that human rights legislation is meant to alleviate.”

BCOHRC has made the same recommendation multiple times since it was reinstated in 2019. No one should face discrimination on the basis of social condition.



Human rights protections for those being detained by the state

BCOHRC believes that we all have the right to be free from arbitrary detention, abuse of power and other unfair treatment if we are detained by the police, in correctional centres, under community supervision or in mental health systems. We seek to ensure public bodies are held accountable for treating people in their custody in accordance with human rights protections.

2024/25 highlights

- launched the final report of the Commissioner's [Inquiry into detentions under the Adult Guardianship Act \(AGA\)](#) that revealed serious human rights issues, including a lack of transparency, oversight and respect for the right to fair process. Entitled "We're still here", the report finds these issues have disproportionately impacted some of the most vulnerable people in B.C., with effects that amount to systemic discrimination. The Commissioner makes ten recommendations to ensure the human rights of adults are respected ([page 34](#))
- continued to carry out an [inquiry into police use of force](#) in B.C. against people who are racialized and/or have mental health issues. The Commissioner's 2021 report to the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act (SCORPA), *Equity is Safer*, revealed a disturbing pattern of discrimination in policing in B.C., which the inquiry is building upon ([page 51](#))
- issued [letter to Ministers of Education and Child Care and Public Safety and Solicitor General](#) in response to developments regarding school police liaison officers and the firing of the School District 61 School Board
- advanced work to implement [Equity is Safer: Human Rights Considerations for Policing Reform in British Columbia](#). Out of 29 recommendations made in *Equity is Safer*, one was fully implemented, 15 were partially implemented or in progress and 13 were not implemented by government ([page 49](#))



By the numbers

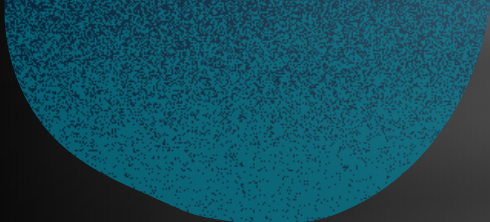
- Detentions under s. 59(2) of the *Adult Guardianship Act* impact a significant number of adults. Between 2018 and September 2023, designated agencies detained 300 people a total of 340 times. The median length of detentions was six days, while the maximum was 212 days.²¹
- Indigenous people are overrepresented in the B.C. correctional system. In 2024, 37 per cent of people in provincial adult custody are Indigenous, compared with Indigenous people making up 5.9 per cent of the population in B.C.^{22 23}
- In 2024, a total of 4,074 individuals were separately confined in B.C. correctional institutes, accounting for 51 per cent of all people in custody. Indigenous women account for 45 per cent of all women in confinement.²⁴

²¹ British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, "We're still here": Report of the Inquiry into Detentions under the Adult Guardianship Act (British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, 2025), 8, https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCOHR_C_Were-still-here_2025.pdf.

²² "BC Corrections Adult Custody Statistics," Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, accessed June 4, 2025, <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNzE2ZmZGI1MjAwLTNkMGQtNGE4YSIiMDM2LWQzNjg1ZTM1OWFkYy-J9&pageName=ReportSection69506dda63e5b4460c64>.

²³ "Statistics on Indigenous Peoples," Statistics Canada, accessed on June 4, 2025, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=british%20columbia&DGUIDlist=2021A000011124,2021A000259&GENDERlist=1&STATISTIClist=4&HEADERlist=21,19>.

²⁴ "BC Corrections Adult Custody Statistics," Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, accessed June 4, 2025, <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNzE2ZmZGI1MjAwLTNkMGQtNGE4YSIiMDM2LWQzNjg1ZTM1OWFkYy-J9&pageName=ReportSection69506dda63e5b4460c64>.



Inquiry into detentions under the *Adult Guardianship Act*

Adults who are abused or neglected are some of the most vulnerable people in our society. When an agency determines one of those adults is unable to give or refuse consent to treatment, there is a risk that adult's right to autonomy will not be properly balanced with the need to ensure their safety.

In November 2023, B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner launched an inquiry into involuntary detentions under the *Adult Guardianship Act* (AGA). In April 2025, the Commissioner released her findings and recommendations in "We're Still Here": Report of the Inquiry into Detentions Under the *Adult Guardianship Act*.

Before this Inquiry, there were a lot of unknowns about how the AGA is used. This Inquiry looked into:

- whether the AGA allows designated agencies to detain adults in a care facility without consent
- whether such detentions are always proportionate to the circumstances
- how many adults are detained under the AGA each year or for how long
- what the demographic characteristics of detainees have been

The Inquiry's process included production orders issued to seven agencies to provide data on involuntary detentions of vulnerable adults, including Fraser Health Authority, Interior Health Authority, Island Health Authority, Northern Health Authority, Vancouver Coastal Health, Community Living BC and Providence Health Care.

The Inquiry also reviewed information from the Ministry of Attorney General, the Ministry of Health and the Public Guardian and Trustee.

In addition, the Commissioner held two community engagement sessions, conducted interviews with family members of adults who were detained under the AGA and interviewed staff in each designated agency.

The Commissioner used Canada's international human rights law commitments as the framework for the analysis.



The Commissioner found:

1. Detentions under s. 59(2) of the AGA impact a significant number of adults.
2. Transparency and oversight over detention are lacking.
3. Adults' rights to fair process have not been adequately respected.
4. Designated agencies who are detaining adults are doing so without legal authority.
5. Disproportionate impact of detention practice on seniors, people who are unhoused and people with disabilities, including people with mental health and substance use issues, results in systemic discrimination.

The Commissioner made 10 recommendations to the Ministry of Attorney General, the Ministry of Health and the designated agencies for change, including that they:

- **immediately stop detaining adults for longer than the duration of an emergency** and ensure all detained adults receive **written reasons** for being detained
- provide **legal advice and representation** to all adults who are detained
- introduce **amendments** to the AGA to clarify whether detention is allowed in emergency situations
- develop provincial **regulations, policies or guidelines** to support implementation of legislative changes to ensure rights are respected
- make **data reporting** mandatory, develop provincial **data standards**, and require annual **public reporting**
- develop mandatory provincial **training**
- consult on the **role of police** under Part 3 of the AGA
- assess and **report publicly** on the community health resources that are required to reduce the number and length of detentions of adults under the AGA
- create an independent mechanism for detained adults to **challenge their detentions** and their conditions
- create an independent officer of the legislature with **oversight of detentions** in health care facilities

“Protecting vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect is a laudable goal in a rights-respecting society. However, we must also ensure that adults’ human rights are upheld in the process.”

— Commissioner Kasari Govender



Creating a strong and sustainable organization

BCOHRC has a sixth operational strategic priority: to create a strong and sustainable organization capable of generating progressive impact on human rights in B.C. This includes building and sustaining a dynamic, healthy, diverse and inclusive team, establishing operational systems and processes in alignment with our goals and guiding principles.

2024/25 highlights

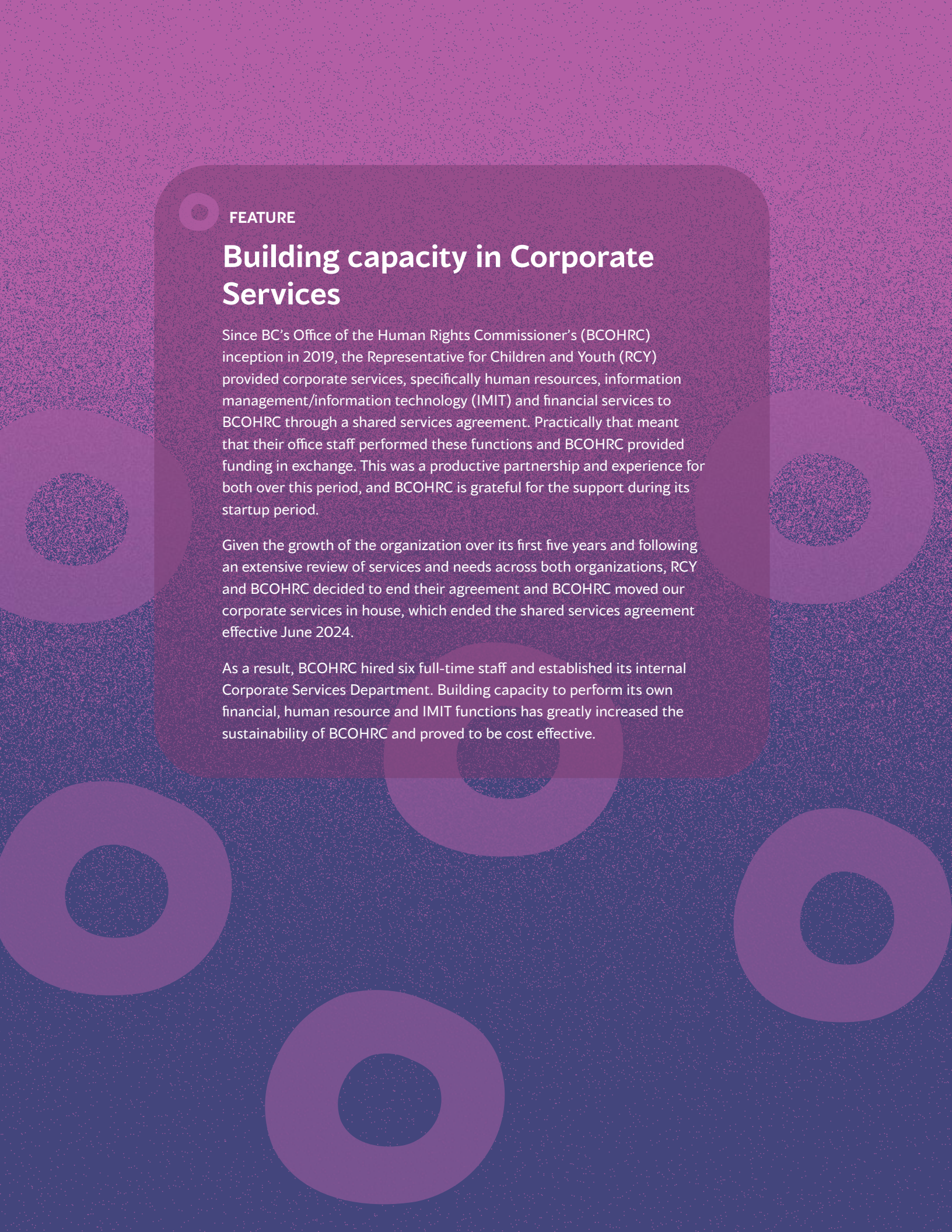
- Commissioner Kasari Govender was unanimously reappointed to a second five-year term by the B.C. Legislative Assembly, beginning Sept. 4, 2024 (page 6)
- transitioned to an in-house Corporate Services Department (information management and technology, finance and human resources) following the conclusion of a shared services agreement with the Representative for Children and Youth (page 38)
- launched and implemented updates to an internal intranet site for BCOHRC to improve internal communication, access to information and efficiencies
- completed a strategic evaluation of the Office's first five years. It assesses BCOHRC's progress in advancing its strategic priorities and contributions to systemic human rights protections in B.C. since its re-establishment in 2019 (page 52)
- increased accessibility by relaunching our main website, bchumanrights.ca, with accessible design as its foundation (page 55)
- started the creation of a new 2025–2030 Strategic Plan for BCOHRC. Expected to release in fall 2025 (page 56)



By the numbers

- BCOHRC received an engagement score of 79 in the 2024/25 BC Public Service Workplace Environment Survey, which suggests a generally engaged and positive work environment.
- an independent evaluator found that BCOHRC has contributed to shaping human rights policy and institutional practices in B.C., with 92 per cent of key informants recognizing its progress and 95 per cent rating its contributions positively.²⁵
- BCOHRC's new Corporate Services department has six full-time staff, including a Chief Financial Officer.

²⁵ Three Hive Consulting, *Strategy and Organizational Evaluation Report* (British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, 2025), <https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCOHRC-Evaluation-Report-Final.pdf>.



FEATURE

Building capacity in Corporate Services

Since BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner's (BCOHRC) inception in 2019, the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) provided corporate services, specifically human resources, information management/information technology (IMIT) and financial services to BCOHRC through a shared services agreement. Practically that meant that their office staff performed these functions and BCOHRC provided funding in exchange. This was a productive partnership and experience for both over this period, and BCOHRC is grateful for the support during its startup period.

Given the growth of the organization over its first five years and following an extensive review of services and needs across both organizations, RCY and BCOHRC decided to end their agreement and BCOHRC moved our corporate services in house, which ended the shared services agreement effective June 2024.

As a result, BCOHRC hired six full-time staff and established its internal Corporate Services Department. Building capacity to perform its own financial, human resource and IMIT functions has greatly increased the sustainability of BCOHRC and proved to be cost effective.

Our 2024/25 impact

To measure the impact of our work and its consequences for human rights across B.C., BCOHRC developed an evaluation and impact framework centred on five concepts:

- building respectful and accountable relationships
- creating accessible and relevant public education materials
- providing recommendations to decision-makers on ways to improve systemic human rights issues
- developing legal arguments to influence case law
- building human rights-based policies, practices and culture

Building respectful and accountable relationships

The quality of our relationships will tell the story of our impact. With each passing year, our Office renews our commitment to building and deepening relationships across the province through engagement, events and direct information and referrals for inquiries from the public.

Public requests for information and referrals

Over our first five years as an organization, BCOHRC has received tens of thousands of calls and emails requesting information and referral to human rights bodies across the province. The volume of inquiries and the breadth of issues raised continues to show the urgent need for human rights education and a place where people can turn to for information when they feel their rights have been violated. We are seeking to meet both needs.

In the 2024/25 period, BCOHRC responded to hundreds of incoming calls, emails and letters from members of the public with questions, comments and issues. This represents a decrease from 2023/24 as a result of the “No Wrong Door” system, which provides helpful tools and information for people to more quickly find the resource best suited to their need.

Inquiries from the public this year were varied and most specifically related to concerns about discrimination under the *Human Rights Code*, followed by inquiries related to school police liaison officer programs, transgender rights and hate speech.

Our community engagement work

BCOHRC's engagement approach is grounded in the four Rs for building respectful relationships: reciprocity, reflexivity, responsibility and relevance.²⁶ While not exhaustive, in 2024/25 this included:

- Commissioner meetings and speaking events to 95 groups and more than 750 people
- 16 introductory meetings and at least 51 project-related meetings
- 26 educational sessions delivered to more than 2,000 learners
- five From Hate to Hope immersive exhibits across B.C., hosting more than 450 attendees
- four roundtable discussions with stakeholders on inquiry topics

The Commissioner reached more than 95 different groups through external speaking engagements. Her presentations were far-reaching, and audiences were diverse, including the First Nations Leadership Council, Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, Health Justice, Ontario Human Rights Commission, Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board, European Economic and Social Committee, EU Ambassador to Canada, Inclusion BC and the Federal Housing Advocate.

A key audience we built relationships with this year was through the public library system. These are important spaces where human rights work happens with the public. We worked over the year to understand the issues facing libraries and library users and how best to support human rights education through libraries. We worked with organizations like the B.C. Library Association and regional library associations to bring forward learning initiatives for librarians, and launched the Commissioner's Book Club complete with pop up engagement tables in libraries across the province.

“Thank YOU! Both the library directors and the board group enjoyed your presentation, the ideas you brought to them, and then the downstream thoughts your presentation created... I also plan to weave parts ...into the respective meeting minutes to ensure the important action items are preserved...It was wonderful to meet you in person and to know that both the Office and public libraries are working towards the same goal, and can support each other in doing so.”

— Regional engagement participant

²⁶ These criteria are adaptations of the four key principles (known as the 4Rs) for participating in Indigenous research—respect, reciprocity, relevance and responsibility—as initially described in 1991 by V.J. Kirkness & R. Barnhardt, “First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's—Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility”, *Journal of American Indian Education*, 30(3), 1991, pp. 1-15.

Our Indigenous engagement work

Relationships of trust and reciprocity are built over the long term. The Commissioner began meeting with Indigenous leadership at the outset of her term, while the Office developed a plan for building relationships with Indigenous communities across B.C. to ensure our work reflects decolonizing principles and supports the rights of Indigenous peoples across the province.

In 2024/25, the Commissioner and BCOHRC had the honour of speaking with many Indigenous communities, governments and representative organizations, including First Nations Leadership Council, Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Justice Council, First Nations Summit, Aboriginal Housing Management Association, Lake Babine First Nation and All My Relations Indigenous Research Centre. BCOHRC presented an Indigenous-specific B.C. *Human Rights Code* workshop to more than 50 people and attended the Turtle Island Festival hosted by Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society and Metis Community Services of B.C.



Creating accessible and relevant public education materials

As an organization with a broad mandate to educate and engage with people and organizations provincially, BCOHRC uses a wide variety of educational content to reach our audiences with the right information to influence attitudinal and behavioural change.

Systemic discrimination resources

Because systemic discrimination is poorly understood, some people have experienced it without realizing and some have unknowingly created or perpetuated discriminatory systems, BCOHRC created a second phase of its free online educational sessions on systemic discrimination. Building on the success of its introductory session, BCOHRC launched Systemic Discrimination: What We Can Do in Nov. 2024 and has offered it twice more in 2024/25. The session builds on the foundations of the Introduction to Systemic Discrimination webinar to provide learners with a more action-oriented look at the issue. The goal is to help participants reflect on how systemic discrimination shows up in their communities, learn to identify its impacts and consider strategies to address it.

This past year, BCOHRC also developed and launched an experiential learning session on systemic discrimination, called Xenon 2. We were responding to feedback from people in British Columbia that they did not understand how a “system” could be discriminatory. This “non-workshop” experiential session, delivered six times over the past year to over 100 people, is designed to support attitudinal change in people with limited or no experience with systemic discrimination and its impacts. The next step to expand the session’s reach was implemented through a community facilitator training pilot that will allow others to lead the session in their communities.



“I believe that having such an office creating awareness for the public is refreshing, and it shows how prevalent and important the [systemic discrimination] issue is.”

— Anonymous survey response

From Hate to Hope immersive exhibit

Following the release of From Hate to Hope: Report of the Inquiry into Hate in the COVID-10 Pandemic, BCOHRC worked with community partners, artists and youth to bring a message of hope to communities. Community groups in Fort St. John, Keremeos, Nanaimo and Vancouver helped design locally relevant murals that share their hopes for their region. To bring the murals to life, an immersive exhibit was developed to share the mural project across B.C., to raise awareness of the Inquiry's findings and recommendations and to facilitate a deeper understanding of how people and communities in British Columbia are thinking about change. The exhibit has toured across the province to Vancouver, Kelowna, Fort St. John and Nanaimo and hosted more than 450 people. The exhibit will next be shown in Victoria later in 2025.

“As we continue to see a rise in hate, it is important to remain focused on addressing these issues in our communities and fostering spaces for dialogue, including through the power of public art. By providing opportunities for people to engage with the ‘From Hate to Hope’ report findings, I hope that we can gain a sense of connection by seeing our experiences reflected in this work or develop a greater understanding by hearing another person’s story.”

— Commissioner Kasari Govender



Equity, diversity and inclusion hiring question and answer (EDI Q and A)

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC) developed an [EDI Q and A](#) resource to provide information about EDI hiring practices. The purpose of this resource is to address common misconceptions and provide accurate information. It builds on BCOHRC's [Employment Equity Toolkit](#), which was created to support employers wanting to learn how to improve equity within their businesses and organizations. Between August 2024 and March 2025, the EDI Q and A had been viewed more than 1,250 times and downloaded more than 100 times.

Hate speech Q and A update

BCOHRC's most popular online resource, the [Hate Speech Q and A](#), was updated in September 2024 for legal accuracy. The resource, viewed 17,991 times over 2024/25, is intended to provide general information on hate speech to support our mandate to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C.

Resources for those who serve guide dog users

BCOHRC created new [educational resources](#) to help workers in the restaurant and taxi industries understand their responsibilities to people who use guide dogs and service dogs. The resources are now available for download and in printed format including infographics, posters, stickers and meeting guides.

Complementarily, we released our newest [I Love My Human Rights](#) video featuring accessibility advocate and guide dog user Georgia Pike. This is the sixth installment in BCOHRC's [I Love My Human Rights](#) series, which uses video storytelling as a tool to help personalize complex human rights concepts and encourage empathy and action. The video launch was accompanied with a [conversation with Georgia Pike](#) about the lived experience of guide dog users.



Easy to understand resources regarding rights and responsibilities under the *Human Rights Code*

Being able to understand our rights and responsibilities under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* is both important and sometimes challenging to understand its legal language. BCOHRC completed its collection of resources that puts these rights and responsibilities into plain language.



Updates to Recommendations Database

In 2023, our Office launched the [Recommendations Database](#), a tool that allows users to search for recent recommendations made by public bodies and community organizations that relate to human rights issues in B.C. In 2025, we updated the human rights recommendations database to include new, improved search features to help users find information more efficiently. This user-friendly tool, viewed 764 times in 2024/25, is designed for community organizations, advocates, researchers and anyone interested in human rights issues in B.C. It allows users to explore 1,600 recommendations detailing their sources, the affected groups and the parties responsible for responding.

Learning sessions

Continuing our successful series of educational sessions, 19 free sessions were given to at least 1,975 people on a number of topics in 2024/25, including B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*, systemic discrimination, disaggregated data and employment equity. [Regular educational sessions](#) are offered on disaggregated data collection, B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* and systemic discrimination.

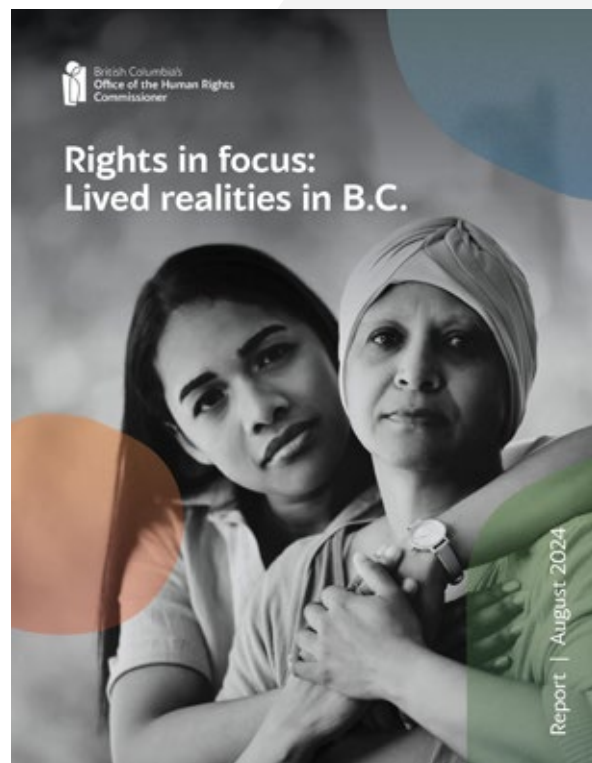


Providing recommendations to the B.C. government and other duty holders on ways to prevent, reduce, mitigate or ameliorate systemic human rights issues

As an independent officer of the Legislature, B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner provides guidance and recommendations to elected officials and government leaders as well as responsible parties in other sectors on ways to ensure these systems cease to disadvantage and discriminate against marginalized communities.

The Office is also focused on preventing human rights violations before they occur. Through our work on educating and engaging with duty holders and holding those in power to account, we aim to increase the number of duty holders that use our recommendations and materials in their teaching, training, policies and practices.

In 2024/25, BCOHRC wrote 52 letters to public bodies regarding six topics: the rights of guide dog users, the Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C. report, homeless encampments, various human rights priorities and recommendations, mental health and substance use treatment and school police liaison officers. Additionally, the Commissioner made two submissions to support the advancement of international human rights through reviews and studies led by the United Nations.



Specifically related to policy, we engaged in more than 160 meetings with a range of external parties, including government bodies, non-profit organizations, community partners, advocacy groups and other public bodies such as local governments and federal departments. The meetings were related to: 32 per cent broader human rights issues, 16 per cent housing and encampments, 16 per cent policing and detention, 15 per cent race and racism, 10 per cent inquiries and recommendations, nine per cent health care and two per cent education.

In August 2024, we published the inaugural Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C. report which was downloaded 1,199 times in 2024/25. This report provides a snapshot of the state of human rights in B.C. in 10 major areas of life, drawing on our community-based research, conversations and research conducted with grants from our Office, and secondary research sources. The Commissioner is committed to repeating this report every three years to monitor and evaluate change over time.

In 2024/25, BCOHRC started its first recommendation verification process to assess the implementation of recommendations made by the Commissioner over her first term. The outcome will be the first of regular reports that review progress made by provincial public bodies on recommendations. The Commissioner will continue to call on the provincial government and other duty holders to implement her recommendations. While the recommendations are not enforceable in law, they are required to achieve compliance with law—both domestic and international—and to build a society that is defined by substantive equality and that realizes the dignity inherent in being human.

Developing legal arguments to influence case law

BCOHRC aims to improve human rights laws and systems in B.C. through the exercise of the Commissioner's powers to hold public legal inquiries and to intervene in court cases that may have a systemic impact on human rights in B.C.

This means that the Commissioner can participate in cases to assist the court or the Tribunal hearing the case to understand issues related to systemic discrimination and legal principles that otherwise might not be raised by the complainant or the responding parties.

In 2024/25, the Commissioner intervened in three ongoing cases.

The Neufeld v. British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) case stems in part from a series of Facebook posts made by then-Chilliwack School Board Trustee Barry Neufeld, who made a series of statements about trans and queer-inclusive education. The BC Teacher's Federation filed a complaint with the BC Human Rights Tribunal alleging, among other things, that Mr. Neufeld engaged in speech that is likely to expose people to hatred or contempt on the basis of their gender identity or expression and sexual orientation. The Commissioner intervened on this matter. In 2024/25, the Commissioner made two Human Rights Tribunal appearances along with one written submission and two oral submissions in this matter. The Tribunal found it has jurisdiction over hate speech online, which was previously unclear and confirms its ability to address hateful content on the internet.

In *Gitxaala Nation v. Chief Gold Commissioner of B.C. et. al.* and *Ehattesah v. His Majesty the King in right of B.C. et al.*, the court's decision in 2023 was appealed and the Commissioner was granted leave to intervene in the appeal. In 2024/25, the Commissioner appeared twice in court before the B.C. Court of Appeal and made two written and two oral submissions. She argued that the incorporation of UNDRIP into B.C. law through the *Declaration Act* means that the articles of UNDRIP must be given legal effect in B.C. and courts must be able to hear cases about those articles. All parties are waiting for the Court of Appeal's decision.

In *Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS) v. R.R.*, the Court's decision in January 2024 generally accepted the Commissioner's argument and affirmed of the Tribunal's crucial role in enforcing human rights protections in child welfare matters. Both parties appealed the overall decision, which put the case before the B.C. Court of Appeal and the Commissioner was granted intervenor status. In 2024/25, she made two court appearances before the B.C. Court of Appeal along with two written and two oral submissions about the BC Human Rights Tribunal's jurisdiction to address cases about discrimination in child protection services in B.C. In 2025, the B.C. Court of Appeal issued a decision that upholds the BC Human Rights Tribunal's jurisdiction to make decisions about discrimination in cases relating to child welfare services.



In 2024/25, BCOHRC conducted three public inquiries with the underlying common theme to shine a light in areas where there has been limited public scrutiny and limited access to information.

BCOHRC launched the final report of the Commissioner's Inquiry into detentions under the *Adult Guardianship Act* (AGA) that revealed serious human rights issues, including a lack of transparency, oversight and respect for the right to fair process. Entitled "We're still here", the report finds these issues have disproportionately impacted some of the most vulnerable people in B.C., with effects that amount to systemic discrimination. The Commissioner makes 10 recommendations to ensure the human rights of adults are respected. The provincial government said it agrees with the intent of the Commissioner's recommendations and is exploring how best to act on them.

"Supporting vulnerable adults means ensuring safety while protecting rights. This report shows we need greater transparency in how the Adult Guardianship Act impacts autonomy. Our experience with the Independent Rights Advice Service demonstrates government can take positive steps forward—momentum that should continue considering this report. We support the B.C. Human Rights Commissioner's recommendations for safeguards ensuring all community members—including those with disabilities and mental health or substance use challenges—receive care while respecting their fundamental human rights."

—Jonny Morris, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division

The Commissioner continued her inquiry into media restrictions during an April 2023 decampment in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). The inquiry aims to determine the details surrounding the restriction of media in the DTES during this time and examine the source of police authority to create exclusion zones without a court injunction. Interviews with media and duty holders were conducted, along with two community engagement sessions and the production of a discussion paper.

The Commissioner's inquiry continued into police use of force in the province. This inquiry aims to quantify police use of force against people who are racialized and/or have mental health issues in B.C. In 2024/25, we obtained provincial use of force data from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, ordered and obtained race-based data from the RCMP and twelve municipal police departments. The inquiry is ongoing.

Building human rights-based policies, practices and culture

Across all our operations, we strive to embody human rights values and organizational guiding principles in our policies (what we say), practices (what we do) and culture (who we are). We do this to model workplace best practices for other employers in both the public and private sector and to recruit and retain the diverse and talented staff needed to execute our mandate.

2024/25 marks the end of the first five years of BCOHRC since Commissioner was first appointed in 2019. While we have grown quickly, we have done so with a view to building an Office that is sustainable and aligned with our guiding principles and with the structures and processes in place that support the Commissioner's mandate into the future.

To build sustainability and continued leadership, Commissioner Kasari Govender was unanimously reappointed to a second five-year term by the B.C. Legislative Assembly, beginning Sept. 4, 2024. In 2024, BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC) took steps to further build accessibility into its work by relaunching its main website, a key deliverable in our three-year plan Accessibility at BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner.

BCOHRC has internal working groups who meet throughout the year to monitor and build on key priorities: Accessibility, Occupational Health and Safety, Future of Work, Workplace Environment Survey (WES) and an ad hoc Employee Experience. BCOHRC also serves as co-chair of an Accessibility Committee with other independent offices of the Legislature to advance accessibility in our office and work.

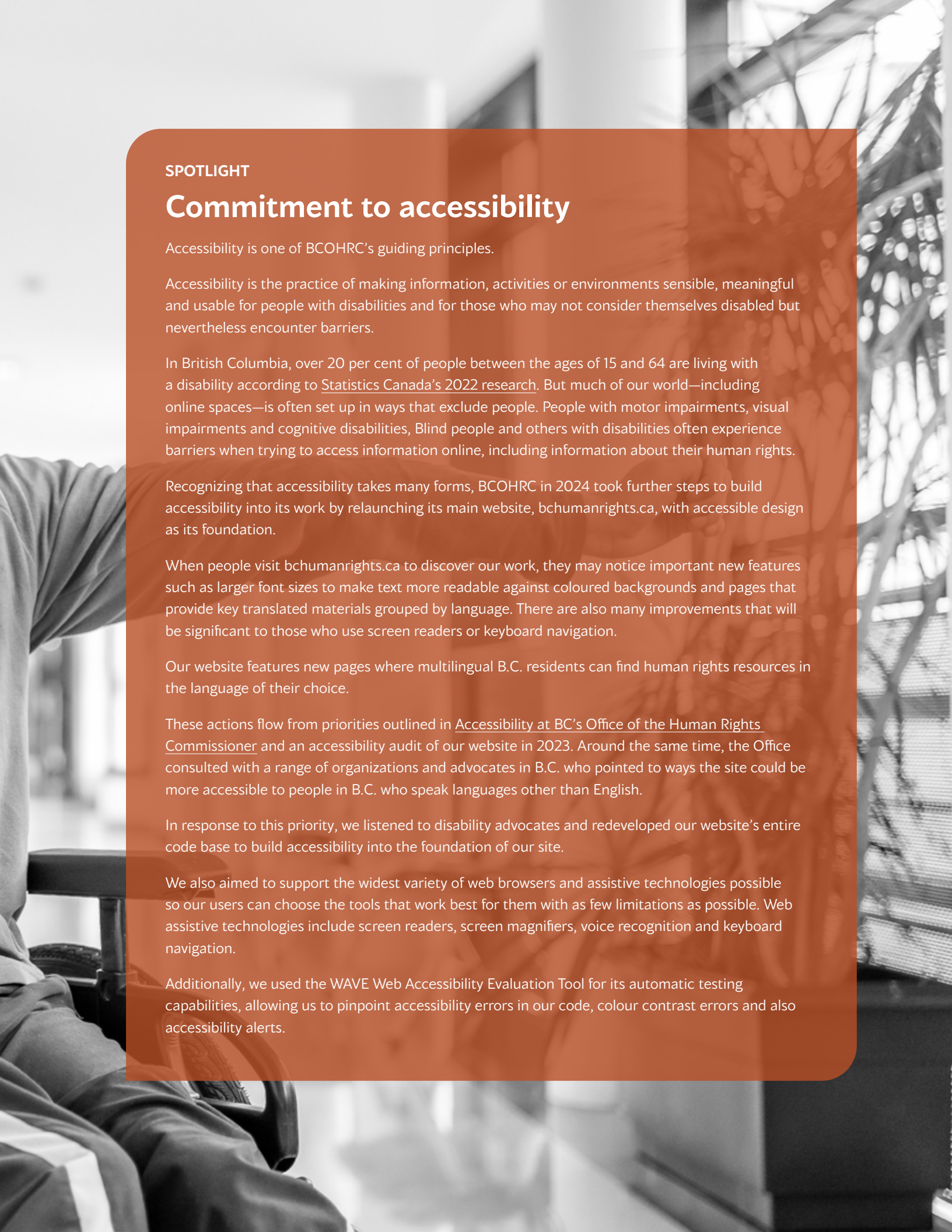
In 2024, our Office transitioned to an in-house Corporate Services department with six full-time staff now leading on all aspects of information management and technology, finance and human resources to ensure BCOHRC has what it needs to achieve its mandate.

Concluding her first five-year term, the Commissioner engaged an external evaluator to conduct a broad organizational evaluation to look at the Office's relevance, outputs and impact. That report, Strategy and Organizational Evaluation Report, produced by Three Hive Consulting, was released in July 2025 and made seven recommendations.

“Accessibility of information, spaces and services is essential to the realization of human rights. Given my Office’s responsibility to provide information and education to the B.C. public, we have a responsibility to regularly audit our resources and engage with community feedback. This website relaunch is an important piece of that work since digital spaces have become vital points of connection and are the way many people access information.”

— Commissioner Kasari Govender



A grayscale background image showing a person in a wheelchair, seen from the side, looking out a window. The view outside the window shows a dense forest of trees. The person is wearing a dark jacket. The wheelchair is partially visible in the foreground.

SPOTLIGHT

Commitment to accessibility

Accessibility is one of BCOHRC's guiding principles.

Accessibility is the practice of making information, activities or environments sensible, meaningful and usable for people with disabilities and for those who may not consider themselves disabled but nevertheless encounter barriers.

In British Columbia, over 20 per cent of people between the ages of 15 and 64 are living with a disability according to [Statistics Canada's 2022 research](#). But much of our world—including online spaces—is often set up in ways that exclude people. People with motor impairments, visual impairments and cognitive disabilities, Blind people and others with disabilities often experience barriers when trying to access information online, including information about their human rights.

Recognizing that accessibility takes many forms, BCOHRC in 2024 took further steps to build accessibility into its work by relaunching its main website, bchumanrights.ca, with accessible design as its foundation.

When people visit bchumanrights.ca to discover our work, they may notice important new features such as larger font sizes to make text more readable against coloured backgrounds and pages that provide key translated materials grouped by language. There are also many improvements that will be significant to those who use screen readers or keyboard navigation.

Our website features new pages where multilingual B.C. residents can find human rights resources in the language of their choice.

These actions flow from priorities outlined in [Accessibility at BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner](#) and an accessibility audit of our website in 2023. Around the same time, the Office consulted with a range of organizations and advocates in B.C. who pointed to ways the site could be more accessible to people in B.C. who speak languages other than English.

In response to this priority, we listened to disability advocates and redeveloped our website's entire code base to build accessibility into the foundation of our site.

We also aimed to support the widest variety of web browsers and assistive technologies possible so our users can choose the tools that work best for them with as few limitations as possible. Web assistive technologies include screen readers, screen magnifiers, voice recognition and keyboard navigation.

Additionally, we used the WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool for its automatic testing capabilities, allowing us to pinpoint accessibility errors in our code, colour contrast errors and also accessibility alerts.

Service plan 2025/26–2027/28

Learning, focusing and thriving

BCOHRC has just completed five years in operation under Commissioner Govender. We will build on the foundation we established and use learnings from our organizational evaluation to build BCOHRC's new strategic plan.

BCOHRC will launch a new strategic plan in fall 2025. This will set a path for the next five years, including our strategic priorities, focus areas and actions to build a thriving organization.

In 2025/26, a year defined by economic uncertainty and multitude opportunities to address human rights issues, it is imperative that BCOHRC continues to thrive—from an engaged workforce to policies and actions that enable a sustainable organization.

We will take steps forward over the next five years to strengthen our focus on promoting and protecting human rights grounded in decolonization, a human-rights based framework and climate justice. This year, we will focus on concluding our previous five-year cycle, as we establish our new strategic plan and identify strategic priorities, focus areas and actions that will see BCOHRC grow in its impact over the next five years.



Ultimately, BCOHRC's work is to protect and promote the human rights of people in British Columbia. Whether we are putting into place the building blocks of a thriving and sustainable organization, educating the public or engaging in conversations about the lived experience of people across British Columbia, justice and equity lies at the heart of our work and of the actions reflected in this service plan. This includes seeking to better understand the most pressing human rights issues of our day and advocating for meaningful and responsive changes to culture, law and policy that will bring dignity and opportunity to every person in British Columbia.

In 2025/26, BCOHRC is committed to action and reporting on progress in the following areas of focus. These areas of focus represent a concluding chapter of Reimagining Human Rights in B.C.: Strategic Plan 2020/21-2024/5 and serve as the inspiration for our actions and measures of success in 2025/26 and beyond.

Focus area: BCOHRC has accessible mechanisms for holding respectful relationships and accountability to all stakeholders.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- type of mechanisms in place
- extent to which relationship and accountability mechanisms are accessible to stakeholders
- extent to which stakeholders describe BCOHRC relationships as respectful

 **Discrimination**  **Decolonization**  **Hate**  **Poverty**  **Detention**  **Organization**

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Maintenance and ongoing improvements to BCOHRC's system for managing public requests for information and referrals and identify trends in systemic rights issues	Maintenance, assess progress and continuous improvement	●	●	●	●	●	●
Maintenance and continuous improvement of the portal and ongoing collaboration with human rights system actors on No Wrong Door initiatives	Maintenance, assess progress and continuous improvement	●	●	●			●
Ongoing information sharing between BC Human Rights Tribunal and BCOHRC, including participation in the Human Rights Tribunal's Expanding Our Vision committee to support greater access for Indigenous Peoples to the human rights system	Ongoing information sharing, including B.C. human rights ecosystem collaboration	●	●	●			●

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Continue Commissioner relationship building with Indigenous leadership, communities and organizations	Ongoing and implement new BCOHRC Indigenous engagement plan		●				
Continue implementation of work plans and collaborative work stemming from signed MOUs with the First Nations Leadership Council and First Nations Education Steering Committee	Continue to implement activities outlined in work plans		●				
Continue to develop a photo library that is more representative of Indigenous communities across B.C. by using decolonial practices to partner with Indigenous photographers	Ongoing		●				
Continue to monitor BCOHRC's website ensuring accessibility and transparency of information	Ongoing						●
Submit annual report to the Legislative Assembly and report biannually to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services	Ongoing and launch new separate annual report and service plan in alignment with new strategic plan						●
Continue public speaking engagements for the Commissioner to speak directly to the public, professional communities and subject matter experts about human rights and the work of BCOHRC	Ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	
Produce new episodes of Beyond the Headlines, conversations with the Commissioner	Assess reach and continue	●	●	●	●	●	
Ongoing regional engagement to establish connections with communities across B.C., build awareness of BCOHRC's mandate and understand human rights issues faced at the regional and community levels	Ongoing regional engagement	●	●	●	●	●	

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Ongoing implementation of effective and robust media engagement strategy	Ongoing						
Conduct an annual poll to assess the understanding and awareness of people in B.C. of their human rights and the work of BCOHRC	Ongoing annual poll administration and assess 2025 results						

Focus area: BCOHRC has a suite of publicly accessible educational and guidance resources and forums.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- number/type of resources available
- number/type of resources accessed
- extent to which resources are accessible
- number/type of forums held (by theme)
- number of forum attendees; disaggregated by audience type
- extent to which forums are accessible

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Continue to deliver public education materials and workshops on the <i>Human Rights Code</i> (tailored to rights holders and duty holders in various sectors), including the continued piloting of Indigenous specific content to be delivered to Indigenous audiences	Ongoing and assess impact						
Launch public awareness campaign on the impact of misinformation and disinformation	Assess impact. Continue annual public awareness campaign topics						
Launch exhibit in Victoria at the Royal B.C. Museum	Consider further promotion or touring						

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
Continuation of I Love My Human Rights storytelling series (one to three videos per year)	Assess impact of videos, and based on learnings continue with videos	●	●		●		
Ongoing fact sheets and policy guidance on other key human rights issues	Ongoing	●	●	●	●	●	●
Continue to deliver and improve educational offerings related to systemic discrimination, including two sessions and an experiential workshop	Ongoing delivery of workshop and distribution of education materials, including assessment of impacts	●	●				
Release and distribution of materials on guide dog users' rights related to public transportation	Distribution of existing and new materials on guide dog users' rights	●					
Continue with monthly Commissioner Book Club picks	Assess impact and determine whether to continue	●	●	●	●	●	
Increase awareness and access to the human rights recommendations database for stakeholders and communities	Monitor recommendations database	●	●	●	●	●	
Create companion materials that expand on topics in the Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C. report.	Publish and distribute expansion materials and evaluate.	●	●	●	●	●	
Implement recommendations from the accessibility audit as part of ongoing identified accessibility actions, including a procurement approach and practices that are free from/ address accessibility barriers	Review progress on identified accessibility actions and continuous improvement	●					●
Continue to build foundational human rights public legal information on website	Assess and update accordingly	●					

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Develop and implement continuous improvement approaches and actions on current language translation practices of BCOHRC, including a translation policy	Implement and assess effectiveness of policy	●					●

Focus area: BCOHRC provides recommendations to the B.C. government and other duty holders on ways to prevent, reduce, mitigate or improve systemic human rights issues.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR:

- number/type/date of recommendations provided by BCOHRC

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Ongoing monitoring and advocacy for the adoption of the hate inquiry recommendations	Assess progress and impacts of the inquiry recommendations as part of the Recommendations Verification work, and through ongoing monitoring and advocacy			●			
Release brief on toxic drug crisis through a human rights-based approach	Monitor and advocate	●			●		
Produce guidance for elected officials on <i>Human Rights Code</i> compliance	Monitor and assess impact	●					
Ongoing monitoring and advocacy for the adoption of recommendations from the Report of the Inquiry into detentions under the <i>Adult Guardianship Act</i>	Monitor and advocate for adoption of recommendations with enhanced strategies				●		

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Release of inquiry report into reports of media restrictions from a decampment site in 2023	Monitor and advocate for adoption of recommendations once released				●		
Release of inquiry report into the use of force by police agencies	Monitor and advocate for adoption of recommendations once released					●	
Preparation work to identify a new inquiry topic	Carry out the inquiry	●					
Begin three-year project to inform the next iteration of Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C.	Assess and plan for the next report in 2027	●	●	●	●	●	
Continue to advocate for the adoption of a human rights-based response to homeless encampments	Ongoing				●		
Continue to administer special programs and implement continuous process improvements and new policy directives	Assess and streamline special programs process for greater efficiency	●					●
Monitor recommendations made to the Attorney General to amend the <i>Human Rights Code</i> to include social condition as a protected ground and continue advocacy	Propose and advance <i>Human Rights Code</i> amendments	●			●		
Ongoing monitoring and advocacy for implementation of recommendations to the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act (SCORPA), including alignment with the <i>Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act</i>	Ongoing monitoring and advocacy for implementation of recommendations		●			●	

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Final audit report of settlement agreement related to the case of <i>Johnson v. Vancouver Police Board</i>	Monitor impact		●			●	
Continue to analyze and monitor current government initiatives and legislation related to human rights, including initiatives concerning anti-racism, anti-hate, mental health detention and treatment, gender-based violence, pay transparency and pay equity, and homelessness	Ongoing monitoring, engagement of duty holders, and actions and recommendations to be determined in alignment with enhanced engagement approaches	●	●	●	●	●	●
Make submissions to the Special Committee to Review Provisions of the <i>Human Rights Code</i>	Monitor for implementation of our submissions and any amendments of the <i>Code</i>	●					

Focus area: BCOHRC develops legal arguments to influence case law.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR:

- number/type/date of arguments made to tribunals and courts

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Intervention in <i>Neufeld v. British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) on behalf of Chilliwack Teachers' Association</i> at the B.C. Supreme Court	To be determined	●		●			
Intervention in <i>Gitxaala Nation v. Chief Gold Commissioner of B.C. et al.</i> and <i>Ehattesaht v. His Majesty the King in right of B.C. et al.</i> at the B.C. Supreme Court	To be determined		●				
Determine and submit applications for leave to intervene in additional cases, as capacity permits	To be determined	●					

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Continue ongoing monitoring of Human Rights Tribunal and other tribunal and court cases for potential interventions	Ongoing						

Focus area: BCOHRC has a culture and a suite of policies and practices that align with the guiding principles, including human rights-based and decolonizing approaches.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- extent to which the BCOHRC culture, policies, and practices embody BCOHRC guiding principles including a human rights-based approach and decolonizing lens
- duration of tenure at BCOHRC (retention); reported reasons for joining/staying/leaving
- use of leave days
- number/percentage of staff who are offered v. who take up professional development opportunities
- number/percentage of staff who report professional development opportunities are equitable, are useful

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Implement BCOHRC's 2025/26 annual work plan and plan for 2026/27 work	Ongoing						
Implement and publish five-year organizational evaluation of BCOHRC strategic plan	Advance applicable recommendations from the organizational evaluation Use learning from the evaluation to inform the new strategic plan, including the creation of a new evaluation framework for the next five years						
Launch new BCOHRC strategic plan	Implement strategic plan						

2025–26 current and planned activities	2026/27–2027/28 future activities	STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA					
							
Continue to build BCOHRC's organizational policy base and implement improvements.	Ongoing						●
Continue to formalize standard operating procedures, guidance materials and training for staff on BCOHRC's core operations including administration; records, task and project management systems; and technology	Policy and procedures align with identified EDI priorities, as well as ongoing continuous improvement approaches						●
Monitor BCOHRC's new internal Corporate Services Department	Assess progress and continue ongoing enhancement of BCOHRC Corporate Services						●
Improve procurement and contract management processes, with continuous improvement approaches	Ongoing						●
Continue to assess, monitor and improve on equity, diversity and inclusion through recruitment practices, ongoing improvements of BCOHRC's employee handbook and implementation of recommendations flowing from the 2024 workplace environment survey	Ongoing						●
Ongoing development and implementation of internal education offerings to ensure staff are supported in ongoing human rights learning	Ongoing						●
Monitor BCOHRC intranet and implement internal communications improvements	Maintenance and continuous improvement						●

Budget and expenditures

BCOHRC's budget is approved annually by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly). BCOHRC has the highest standard in directing investment of public resources in enabling and supporting our mandate. In principle and practice, this means:

- adhering to provincial legislation and policies related to spending or fiscal expenditures
- focusing on maximizing the impact the BCOHRC budget has on promoting systemic equality by directing our resources to evidence-based projects that are reflective of what rights holders and duty holders have identified as their most significant rights issues
- focusing resources where we can enhance the rights of the most marginalized in our communities
- continually assessing, evaluating and improving
- continuing to be transparent and accountable through regular reporting to the Treasury Board and the Office of the Comptroller General. We provide regular reports to the all-party Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services of the Legislative Assembly.

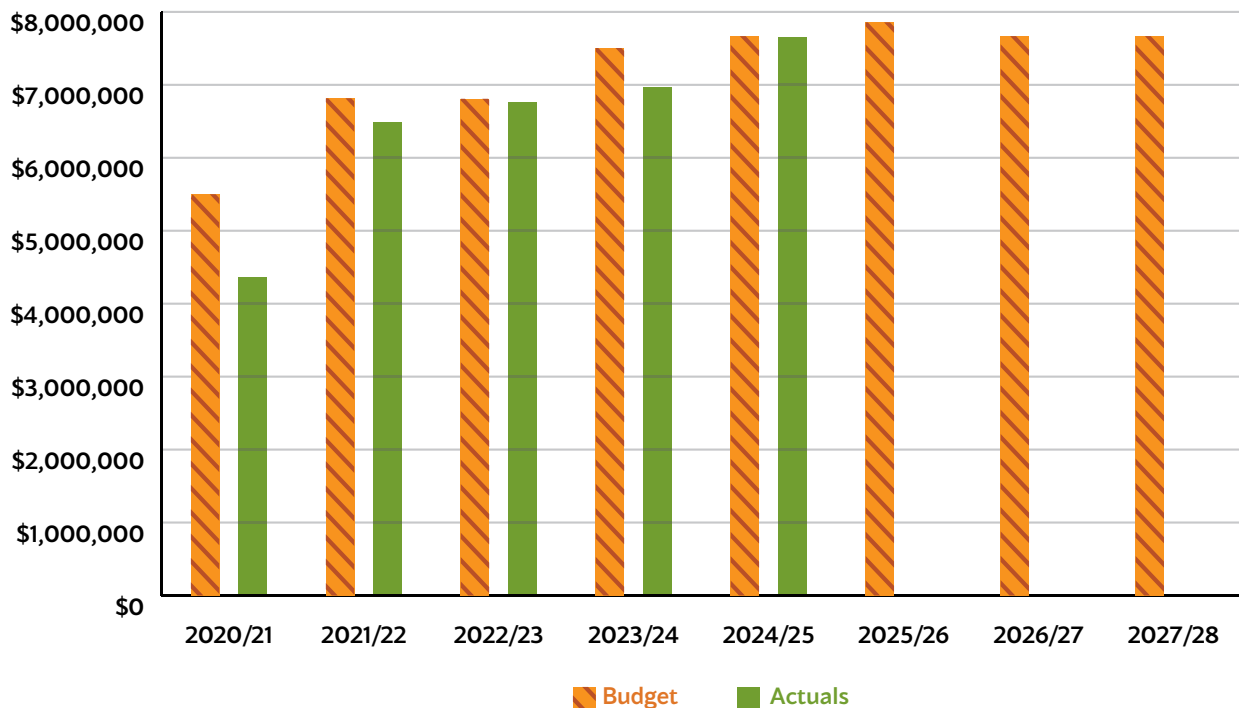
Our finances

The Legislative Assembly of B.C. approved an operating budget for BCOHRC of \$7.668 million in 2024/25. The BCOHRC operating budget for 2025/26 is \$7.856 million including an approved supplementary funding request of \$188,050 for 2025/26. The approved budget for the next three years will be confirmed with the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in Fall 2025. The capital budget remains \$35,000 over the next three fiscal years.

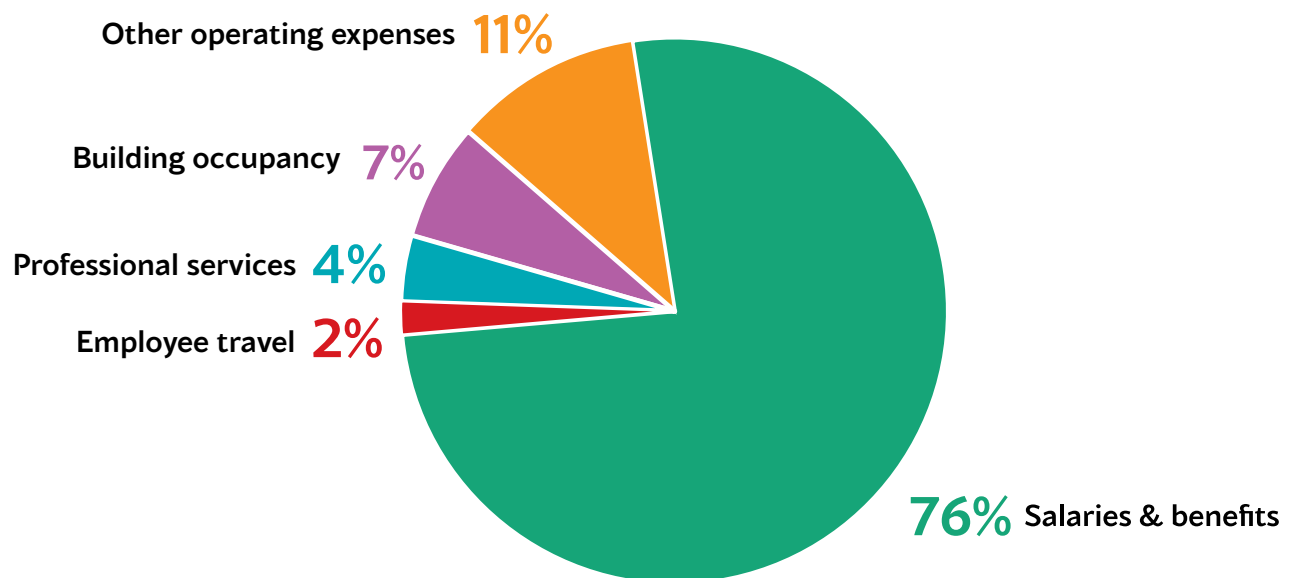
Our budget

Highlights of the BCOHRC 2025/26 budget details illustrated.

Approved operating budget to actual per fiscal year



Breakdown of projected 2025/26 operating budget by expenditure type



Public Interest Disclosure Agreement

Public Interest Disclosure Act: Annual report about disclosures for BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

The *Public Interest Disclosure Act* (PIDA), B.C.'s new whistleblower protection law, came into force on Dec. 1, 2019.

One of the requirements is that, "Each year, a chief executive, or a delegate of the chief executive, must prepare a report on all disclosures of wrongdoing that have been made that year in respect of the ministry, government body or office for which the chief executive is responsible, including disclosures made to the Ombudsperson, if a designated officer of the relevant ministry, government body or office has been notified about the disclosures or investigations."

In accordance with the following sections of PIDA, for the reporting period of Apr. 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, the following information is reported:

Section 38 (2)

Disclosures of wrongdoing in respect of BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner0

Section 38 (2)

(a) the number of disclosures received, including referrals of disclosures,

and the number acted on.....0

and not acted on.....0

(b) the number of investigations commenced as a result of a disclosure.....0

(c) in the case of an investigation that results in a finding of wrongdoing.....0

(i) a description of the wrongdoing

(ii) any recommendations, including those made by the Ombudsperson, and

(iii) any corrective action taken in relation to the wrongdoing or the reasons why no corrective action was taken;

(d) any other information prescribed by regulation.....0



Kasari Govender
B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner





British Columbia's
**Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner**

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