



British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner

July 2025 submission to the Special Committee to Review Provisions of the *Human Rights Code*


July 2025

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JULY 2025

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

**To the Indigenous peoples of
this place we now call British
Columbia:**

**Today we turn our minds to you
and to your ancestors. You have
kept your lands strong. We are
grateful to live and work here.**



JULY 2025

Jennifer Blatherwick, MLA
Chair of the Special Committee to Review Provisions of the Human Rights Code
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Ms. Blatherwick,

I am pleased to present these initial submissions to the Special Committee to Review Provisions of the Human Rights Code, in response to the Committee's invitation. I look forward to discussing these matters with the Committee and to making additional submissions with recommendations later in the Committee's process.

Sincerely,



Kasari Govender

B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner

cc: Jennifer Arril
Clerk of Committees

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

Background

On May 26, 2025, B.C.'s Legislative Assembly appointed the [Special Committee to Review Provisions of the Human Rights Code](#) ("Committee"), which is tasked with reviewing sections 47.01 to 47.24 of the *Human Rights Code* (R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 210) ("Code"), pursuant to section 50.1 of the Code. The Committee will be conducting the first statutorily mandated five-year review of these sections of the Code, which all apply to B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner.

B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner has prepared this initial submission in response to a request by the Committee. The purpose of this submission is to provide an overview of B.C.'s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC), including the history of the Office, some of our key achievements and how we have engaged communities across B.C. in order to protect and promote human rights in our province.

Brief history of BCOHRC

From 2002 until 2019, B.C. lacked a Human Rights Commission or Commissioner. The impact was significant:

[...] B.C. is falling very far behind other provinces. Groups told us that the absence of a human rights commission means that there is now a "void" or a "vacuum" in British Columbia when it comes to human rights education and awareness.¹

In 2017 the government announced that it intended to re-establish a human rights commission in B.C., and tasked Ravi Kahlon, then the Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Multiculturalism, to lead a public engagement process and provide recommendations for the model, scope and priorities of the province's new human rights commission.

In his report, [A Human Rights Commission for the 21st century: British Columbians talk about Human Rights - A report and recommendations to the Attorney General of British Columbia](#) ("Kahlon Report"), Parliamentary Secretary Kahlon noted that British Columbia was the only province in Canada without a commission—a situation that had also been noted by provincial, national and international observers. When B.C.'s previous Human Rights Commission was eliminated in 2002, it left only the Human Rights Tribunal to resolve human rights complaints after alleged discrimination occurred. As an impartial mediator and decision maker, the Tribunal was not able to take on systemic discrimination by instituting preventative measures to combat discrimination or to take on province-wide educational and advocacy functions.

On Nov. 27, 2018, Bill 50 (the *Human Rights Code Amendment Act*, 2018) was passed, amending the Code to create the position of Human Rights Commissioner as an officer of the Legislature. Bill 50 adopted all elements of the recommendations in the Kahlon Report related to the structure of the Human Rights Commission.

Following the unanimous recommendation of a special committee of the Legislative Assembly, Kasari Govender was appointed as B.C.'s first independent Human Rights Commissioner on May 29, 2019.

1 Gwen Brodsky and Shelagh Day, *Strengthening Human Rights: Why British Columbia Needs a Human Rights Commission* (Vancouver: The Poverty and Human Rights Centre and Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - BC Office, 2014), at p. 26.

Commissioner Govender formally assumed her position on Sept. 3, 2019, beginning a five-year term. On May 15, 2024, Commissioner Govender was unanimously reappointed for a second term, which she began on Sept. 3, 2024.

To carry out the powers and perform the duties of the Office, Commissioner Govender is empowered to appoint the necessary employees and has done so. Since 2019, this Office has been known as BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, or BCOHRC.

The Commissioner's initial mandate was both to build the organization and to protect and promote human rights in B.C.

Who we are now

Legislative mandate

The *Human Rights Code* originally became law in British Columbia in 1973 and has been revised a number of times since then. The goals of the *Code* are:

- a. to foster a society in British Columbia in which there are no impediments to full and free participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of British Columbia;
- b. to promote a climate of understanding and mutual respect where all are equal in dignity and rights;
- c. to prevent discrimination prohibited by this *Code*;
- d. to identify and eliminate persistent patterns of inequality associated with discrimination prohibited by this *Code*; and
- e. to provide a means of redress for those persons who are discriminated against contrary to this *Code*.

The *Code* is focused on preventing and addressing discrimination, primarily focusing on three areas of life: employment, housing and services usually available to the public. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of a number of protected grounds, such as race, gender and disability.

The *Code* lays out the mandate, powers and responsibilities of a fully independent Commissioner that is entirely focused on addressing systemic human rights issues. The legislation tasks the Commissioner with "promoting and protecting" human rights and s. 47.12 empowers the Commissioner to use various tools or actions to fulfil this mandate, including:

- conducting research to further province wide discussion and understanding of human rights issues
- engaging in law and policy reform, which entails policy analysis and making recommendations to government, as well as providing policy guidance to duty bearers
- producing public information and education about human rights, which is essential to systems change
- engaging with the public to ensure that we are living our guiding principle of "nothing about us, without us"
- approving "special programs" designed to further the purposes of the *Code* by advancing substantive equality through targeted hiring and service initiatives
- intervening in any case before the BC Human Rights Tribunal or applying for leave to intervene in any court case; intervening does not entail representing either side in a dispute, but rather making an argument about the longer-term implications of legal issues at stake and what impact they may have on

the development or protection of human rights in the province

- conducting public inquiries into any issue the Commissioner considers related to the promotion or protection of human rights

Related provisions of the *Code* allow the Commissioner to compel organizations to disclose information and witnesses to appear when conducting an inquiry (when filed at the B.C. Supreme Court, the Commissioner's orders have the same weight as an order of a B.C. Supreme Court judge).

It is important to note that the Human Rights Tribunal is the body that receives and decides complaints of discrimination under the *Code*, acting as a quasi-judicial body in these cases, and that in the case of unionized employees alleging discrimination by their employer, such complaints can be brought before a labour arbitrator. These processes—and the Tribunal itself—are entirely separate from BCOHRC. In other words, the Commissioner is not mandated to and does not receive, screen, adjudicate or resolve complaints or applications, as the former B.C. commission used to do. Instead, our role is to promote and protect human rights through systemic change.

The Commissioner has further articulated her legislative directive to promote and protect human rights in the province as a mandate to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures.² BCOHRC envisions a province free from inequality, discrimination and injustice where we uphold human rights for all and fulfil our responsibilities to one another.

What makes us unique

In relation to the other statutory officers in the province, the Human Rights Commissioner is unique in the breadth of her mandate. The Commissioner is responsible for protecting the human rights of all people in the province and promoting awareness and respect for rights among all duty holders, including employers, landlords and service providers representing every sector and industry. Since BCOHRC's inception, we have worked in many different sectors ranging from policing and health care to the social media and restaurant industries.

In the context of human rights commissions across the country, there are three features of the Commissioner's role that, together, make BCOHRC unique:

1. **A focus on systemic change:** All other Commissions except Ontario have some kind of direct relationship to the work of tribunals that make decisions on human rights complaints, including screening complaints, assisting in settlement negotiations and mediation and representing the public interest in cases that go before the Tribunal. As noted above, BCOHRC is not part of the human rights complaints process, but instead focuses on shifting systems that create or allow for human rights issues to arise.
2. **Promoting compliance with international human rights law** (pursuant to s. 47.12(1)(i)): This significantly broadens the scope of human rights within our mandate, stretching our responsibilities beyond only preventing and addressing discrimination in employment, housing and services. While the Canadian Human Rights Commission does have specific responsibilities regarding international law, no other provincial or territorial commission has this broad international law mandate.
3. **Reporting to the Legislature:** B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner is established by law under s. 47.01(2)

2 "Reimagining human rights in B.C.: Strategic Plan 2020/21-2024/25" ("BCOHRC's Strategic Plan"), at page 22.

as an independent officer of the Legislature, which means that the Commissioner reports to the Legislature and not to the government.

As indicated by the third point, B.C. is the only jurisdiction where the Human Rights Commissioner is a fully independent officer of Legislature, which enables BCORHC to effectively protect and promote human rights free from political pressures. There are two important indicia of independence that inform the structure of the Commissioner's role. First, the Commissioner is appointed upon the unanimous recommendation of an all-party legislative committee, which then faces a vote in the Legislature. Second, the Office's budget is confirmed following a recommendation from an all-party committee on Finance and Government Services. Thus, neither the appointment of the Commissioner nor the Office's budget is dependent on the government of the day and both are removed from the pressures of partisanship.

The structure of independence is important not just so BCOHRC can be free of *actual* conflicts of interest but also because the Office's work is free from the *appearance* of conflicts of interest. It is vital for the Office's credibility with the public that they understand and can see that BCOHRC is separate from the executive branch of government and outside the influence of partisan politics. These structures of independence are a common thread among statutory officers.

Staff composition and structure of organization

The *Code* provides the Commissioner with a number of tools to fulfil her mandate (detailed above). The Office is structured to reflect these tools. BCOHRC is made up of the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner and five departments: Finance & Corporate Services (including Finance, Human Resources and IM/IT), Communications & Operations, Education & Engagement, Research & Policy and Legal. Each department has an Executive Director (or General Counsel for Legal), who join the Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner as the Senior Executive Team.

BCOHRC is now supported by a complement of 43 full-time staff. The organization grew steadily and according to plan for the first three years of its development, ably supported by the Representative for Children and Youth's (RCY) shared corporate services team. In its third year, the organization grew to its full staff complement as originally envisioned and, in the fifth year, BCOHRC's agreement with RCY for shared corporate services expired and BCOHRC developed its own in-house corporate services team over the following year. No further significant growth is currently anticipated.

By the numbers

- BCOHRC has undertaken **four systemic inquiries** under the unique powers of the Commissioner under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*. Two of these are still underway while the findings from the two completed inquiries—the Inquiry into Detentions under the Adult Guardianship Act (We're Still Here) and the [Inquiry into Hate in the COVID-19 Pandemic \(From Hate to Hope\)](#)—have resulted in 22 calls to action, some of which have already led to meaningful change, and significant policy considerations.
- BCOHRC's **four awareness campaigns**—including “Let's #RewriteTheRules” and “Am I Racist?”—have raised public awareness and sparked public dialogue on systemic discrimination and equity. Most notably, they have highlighted structural inequities facing people with disabilities and the harms of the rise of mis- and disinformation and actions that can be taken in response (launching later this year across the province).

- BCOHRC has developed foundational online and offline **public legal information** resources to educate and empower people across the province. An informed population is a healthier population. The resources on our website are wide-ranging, including video series, factsheets, guidance for duty holders and rights holders. For example, our question and answer page on hate speech continues to be our most popular page, even years after its initial launch, garnering nearly **50,000 views** to-date.
- We have seen extensive public engagement with our **online materials** overall. For example, in just the six-month period between October 2023 and March 2024, the Office recorded over **11,300 resource downloads and 140,053 website visits**. As another example, the I Love My Human Rights video series has been watched nearly 24,000 times, which illustrates the value of storytelling and empathy building to human rights education.
- BCOHRC has strategically **intervened** in legal cases to strengthen human rights protections in B.C., with all **nine intervention requests granted** since 2021. These efforts illustrate BCOHRC's role in shaping precedent and advancing systemic equity through the legal system.
- BCOHRC's **four research publications** have contributed to legal, policy and cultural shifts by uncovering systemic discrimination and informing equity-focused decision-making. For example, The Grandmother Perspective report shaped the *Anti-Racism Data Act* and established best practices for community-driven data governance. In addition, the Rights in Focus report surveys the landscape of human rights in the province by outlining 10 key systems that engage the rights of people in British Columbia and contain obstacles to their full participation in economic, social and political life of our society. BCOHRC's reports have been extensively cited in legal documents and in the media, signalling a growing influence.
- BCOHRC has approved **152 active special programs** across a variety of sectors. After the transfer of approval responsibilities from the BC Human Rights Tribunal to the Commissioner in 2023, BCOHRC reduced processing times by half, increasing responsiveness.
- From 2019 to 2025, the Commissioner delivered **136 speaking engagements**, reaching an audience of over **15,698 people**. Across all **external training and workshop offerings** (excluding Commissioner presentations), BCOHRC has had **4,126 unique learners or attendees**. From 2024 to 2025 alone, there were 30 specialized learning sessions with 935 learners and seven public education sessions with 1,141 learners, with 73% reporting that the content was well-balanced and valuable.
- Over the past five years, there have been almost **6,000 media** mentions about BCOHRC's work, including on average 777 mentions of the Commissioner each year. The Office has put out approximately 119 media releases since 2019.
- Importantly, the Commissioner has issued **159 formal recommendations**, which have been monitored through an extensive reporting structure, as outlined in our [Where We Stand report](#). Of the recommendations made between September 2019 and August 2024, **progress was made on 58 per cent**, with 11 per cent fully implemented and 47 per cent partially implemented or in progress. Tracking and publicizing the implementation of recommendations is essential to creating accountability and transparency for public bodies. BCOHRC intends to undertake a recommendation monitoring process every three years and produce the next report in 2028.
- Additionally, in 2024, the Office launched a searchable [Recommendations Database](#) which compiles **nearly 1,700 recommendations** from over 70 external reports and sources, enhancing accessibility and supporting policy development across the province.

Key projects and achievements

As noted above, BCOHRC has published many research reports and policy guidance documents, conducted many inquiries and interventions and produced many educational materials for general audiences, K–12 schools, employers, service providers and rights holders. Below are just a few examples of projects that demonstrate the impact BCOHRC has had on human rights in B.C.:

Inquiry into hate in the COVID-19 pandemic

In August 2021, the Commissioner launched an inquiry into the rise of hate in B.C. during the COVID-19 pandemic. The inquiry explored the ways in which hate increased during the pandemic, where hate comes from and what action can be taken to stop hate immediately and in future times of crisis.

The Commissioner gathered information and evidence through:

- 46 virtual oral hearings where we heard from 100 people, including 52 organizations
- 20 written submissions
- a public opinion poll of a representative sample of people living in British Columbia
- a public survey where we heard from more than 2,500 people
- information requests to 46 public bodies
- two sets of information requests to all municipal police departments in B.C. and the B.C. RCMP
- orders and information requests to seven social media companies
- five external research reports on topics relevant to the Inquiry
- cross-jurisdictional research
- an in-person Elders gathering

In March 2023, the Commissioner released her findings and recommendations through the report *From Hate to Hope: Report of the Inquiry into Hate in the COVID-19 Pandemic*. The report covers what BCOHRC learned during this inquiry and includes:

- stories of hate and its impact on people and communities
- graphs and charts sharing numbers that help to show where, in what forms and to what extent hate is happening
- results of academic research that helps us understand where hate comes from
- recommendations about how we can work together to stop hate

After reviewing the evidence presented in this report, the Commissioner issued 12 multifaceted recommendations with the following themes:

- understanding hate and acknowledging its harm
- building safety and belonging
- fostering accountability and repairing harm

The 12 recommendations break down into 37 sub-recommendations, one of which has been fully implemented, 22 of which have been partially implemented or are in progress and 14 of which have not been implemented. While significant progress has been made to address racism, including the passing of the *Anti-Racism Act* in 2024, actions directed more broadly at additional forms of hate have not been implemented.

In addition to monitoring recommendations, BCOHRC also developed the *From Hate to Hope* campaign in 2023, a set of educational and awareness resources developed in support of the inquiry into hate. To engage the public in the report findings, BCOHRC worked with community groups in four regions of the province to explore relevant local themes from the report and to develop and paint four community-led murals in high-traffic public areas of Keremeos, Fort St. John, Nanaimo and Vancouver.

Once completed, to speak to our provincial mandate and to continue bringing the inquiry into hate to other audiences across the province, we developed a 20+ minute audio-visual experience that used artistic experiences to invite audiences to move through the challenging moments in which we find ourselves. This immersive exhibit tells the story of our Office and shares what we heard during the inquiry and the hope we saw through our community processes. It reached over 450 people in 2024 and sparked conversations on what it means to move from hate to hope. This year, the exhibit will be showcased at the Royal BC Museum in Victoria.

Disaggregated demographic data in BC: the Grandmother Perspective

On Jun. 16, 2020, Premier John Horgan asked the Commissioner for her advice on the development of a policy approach to the collection of race-based, Indigenous and other disaggregated data to address systemic racism. As a result, the Commissioner undertook a research project that included community consultation, an extensive literature review and policy analysis.

The resulting report, [Disaggregated Demographic Data Collection in British Columbia: The Grandmother Perspective](#), presents a framework for disaggregated data collection. The report states that community-based data governance is essential to address the risks that data collection and use can reinforce stereotypes, stigma and bias. It makes the case that the process of collecting data is as important as the actual use of data in guarding against harms. Guarding against these risks requires researchers to stay consistently aligned with the purpose of data collection—for example, to measure racism and not race.

The Grandmother Perspective report details recommendations for government in building respectful relationships where marginalized communities are meaningfully involved throughout the stages of collection, storage, use and distribution of disaggregated data. The Commissioner issued 13 recommendations along the following themes:

- a process for community and Indigenous-led data governance
- creating an Anti-Discrimination Data Act
- collecting disaggregated data, for example, in relation to COVID-19 and social determinants of health and access to care, mental health detentions and police services.

Out of 13 recommendations made in the Grandmother Perspective report, three have been fully implemented, eight have been partially implemented or are in progress and two have not been implemented.

Based on the principles outlined in the report, a key recommendation was to establish a legislative structure to support the collection of disaggregated data in service of systemic equality—with the meaningful involvement of marginalized communities.

The Commissioner's recommendation for new legislation was reflected in the fall 2020 mandate letters of the Attorney General and the new Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives. The Commissioner and staff worked closely with the Ministry of Attorney General in its development of the legislation.

As a result, in June 2022, government passed the *Anti-Racism Data Act* (ARDA), which allows government to safely collect and use information to address systemic racism. The ARDA was largely shaped by the Commissioner's Grandmother Perspective report. It marked a significant milestone in the implementation of the Commissioner's recommendations in law and it was an important marker of our province's growth toward a more equal society. The Grandmother Perspective report now serves as an important framework in guiding the implementation of the ARDA and government continues to seek the Commissioner's advice in the implementation phase.

Inquiry into detentions under the Adult Guardianship Act

Between 2023 and 2025, the Commissioner undertook an inquiry related to detentions under the *Adult Guardianship Act* (AGA), asking the following questions: (1) whether and to what extent vulnerable adults are being detained under the emergency protection provisions of the AGA and (2) whether such detentions are lawfully permitted and in accordance with the Province's human rights obligations. This inquiry was not intended to undermine the important goals of protecting vulnerable adults, but rather to integrate human rights approaches into the AGA's protection mechanisms to safeguard adults' dignity and well-being.

The Commissioner gathered extensive data and records from the Ministry of Attorney General, the Ministry of Health, the Public Guardian and Trustee and designated agencies such as health authorities. 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. Canada's international human rights law commitments were the framework for the analysis.

The report "[We're Still Here: Report of the Inquiry into Detentions under the Adult Guardianship Act](#)" was released in April 2025. It revealed serious human rights issues, including a lack of transparency, oversight and respect for the right to fair process for people who are detained under the AGA. Furthermore, it found that disproportionate impact of detention practices on seniors, people who are unhoused and people with disabilities, including people with mental health and substance use issues, amounts to systemic discrimination.

The Commissioner made 10 recommendations along the following themes:

- strengthening protection of legal rights and due process
- creating legislative clarity and regulations reform
- creating mechanisms for transparency and accountability
- implementing mandatory training for staff
- investing in more community-based supports for adults in need of protection

The Ministry of Attorney General said in a statement that the report highlights opportunities to clarify the law and implement guidelines. The government indicated to the Commissioner and publicly that it agrees with the intent of almost all the recommendations and is working on an implementation plan.

Guide dog education materials

Over the years, BCOHRC became aware of many stories of guide dog users being treated poorly and refused service by taxis, cafes and restaurants, among other service providers, because of their guide dogs. These incidents were indicative of misinformation and discrimination in the service industry. Everyone in B.C. has a right to be free from discrimination in accessing services. Being aware of the rights of people who use service and guide dogs is important to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities in our province.

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 a suite of [educational resources](#) (including infographics, posters, stickers and meeting guides) launched in September 2024. These resources explain the human rights of people who use guide dogs and service dogs and help workers in those industries provide excellent, accessible customer service and meet their legal responsibilities under B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*. Supporting these resources, we also released our latest [I Love My Human Rights](#) video featuring an accessibility advocate and guide dog user. This year, we are expanding this work into public transit across the province.

Commissioner's book club

In December 2024, BCOHRC launched the [Commissioner's Book Club](#) to foster conversations and build deeper understanding of human rights issues through the power of stories, while simultaneously offering people across the province the chance to find a reading community. Stories are a useful tool for fostering empathy, connecting with other people's experiences and inspiring thought-provoking discussions on the big issues of our time. Each month, we feature one book for adults and one illustrated book for preschool readers. A discussion guide is developed to accompany each book to help readers reflect on their themes and connect them to human rights issues. About 105 libraries expressed interest in the Commissioner's Book Club in the first three months of launching. Those numbers continue to increase as our team engages with more libraries across the province. Over the first six months of the Commissioner's Book Club, the Book Club's webpage has been viewed more than 2,800 times, conversations guides downloaded more than 400 times and earned media coverage has reached an estimated 129,000 people.

In December 2025, BCOHRC will begin the second year of the book club, which will continue to feature books for adults and will add books for elementary school-aged children.

Financial stability

During the Commissioner's first term, BCOHRC was building the Office's organizational capacity while at the same time working to fulfil the Commissioner's mandate. Foundational to both efforts was ensuring the Office was fiscally responsible and stable. As is evident in BCOHRC's annual budget submissions to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, the Office has consistently achieved these goals.

Since our Office's inception, the organization has stayed true to the three-year budget presented in October 2019 and in accordance with the original vision. As a result, we have never asked for any significant increases beyond those required to fairly compensate staff, in response to inflation. This consistent vision guided us through the startup phases of the organization and continues to form the backbone of our organizational structure, human resources and strategic approach to delivering on the Commissioner's mandate. This consistency demonstrates the Commissioner's accountability to British Columbians and to the Legislature. The success of this Office demonstrates that the structure of the Commissioner's role has effectively served the goals of the *Code*.

Engaging communities and setting strategic directions

One of BCOHRC's key guiding principles is "nothing about us without us." To drive meaningful social change, we have sought to understand the landscape of human rights across the province by listening to those most impacted and building relationships in diverse communities across the province.

Our [five-year Strategic Plan \(2020/21–2024/25\)](#) set the foundation for our work by outlining our vision, mandate, theory of change, guiding principles, strategic priorities and approach to understanding our impact on promoting and protecting human rights in the province. This plan was developed at the beginning of the Commissioner's first term and was based on extensive research on human rights in B.C. (including reviews of countless reports and recommendations) and information gathered from our peers in B.C.'s human rights system, civil society and human rights commissions across the country and around the world.

The Commissioner's strategic priorities for her first term were: discrimination as defined by B.C.'s *Human Rights Code*, decolonization, hate and the rise of white supremacy, poverty as a cause and effect of inequality and injustice and human rights protections for those being detained by the state. Operationally, we were focused on creating a strong and sustainable organization.

BCOHRC recently commissioned a third-party organizational evaluation, which confirmed that we have made meaningful advancements across all six strategic priorities.³ Notably, the evaluator found that BCOHRC has contributed to shaping human rights policy and institutional practices in B.C., with 92% of key informants recognizing its progress and 95% rating its contributions positively.

Since the Office's beginnings, we have built advisory processes into almost all our project work. For example, for our Rewrite the Rules campaign addressing ableism, we were guided by an advisory group of people with lived experience of disabilities and who served the disability community. Their guidance was invaluable in shaping our campaign. The evaluation report highlighted the strength of our engagement approach:

- In a survey circulated by the evaluators, 84% of key informants agreed that **BCOHRC maintains strong working relationships with their organizations**, reflecting its ability to foster meaningful partnerships.
- Key informants in interviews, particularly those in the "other priority key informants" category (non-profit/community interest organizations, other duty bearers and other human rights offices), highlighted **BCOHRC's professionalism, adaptability and commitment to mutual benefit**, noting that the Office consistently demonstrates its core values through respectful and effective interactions, even when perspectives differ.
- **The Office's relationships with the federal and provincial government and with human rights bodies were identified as key strengths in the interviews**, with government and IOLA staff key informants emphasizing open communication and collaborative problem-solving as key contributors to the Office's influence.

Accessibility in all of our work is a priority of the Office to ensure everyone in B.C. can access informational

3 Three Hive Consulting, Strategy and organizational evaluation report, British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, 2025.

and educational materials about their human rights. Our work is designed for a range of abilities, cultures, languages, education levels, learning styles and viewpoints. We have translated many of our materials into at least 12 languages and have taken the advice of multilingual service organizations, settlement agencies and peer organizations in refining our translation approach and practices. For example, consultation with these groups led us to create a set of webpages where multilingual B.C. residents can more easily navigate human rights resources in the language of their choice. These pages were launched alongside a refresh of our website, which built accessibility measures directly into the site's code base in response to recommendations from a 2023 accessibility audit and commitments made in our Accessibility at BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner report. In 2024, we released [Rights in Focus: Lived Realities in B.C.](#), which was the culmination of a number of years of research aimed at understanding the landscape of human rights in the province, in part to inform our work and in part to further understanding of human rights issues across the province. We drew on diverse sources—including affected communities, support organizations, and research from academia, governments, and NGOs—to build an accurate picture.

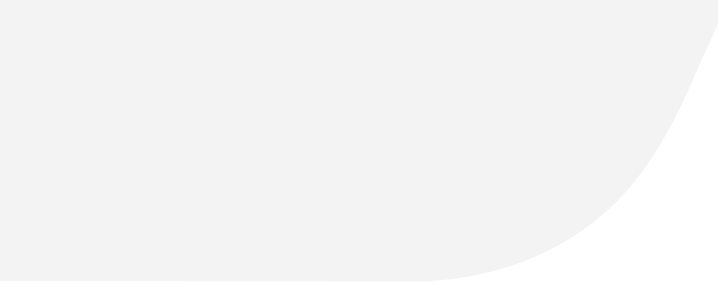
Based on this extensive engagement and research work, the Commissioner has identified two new strategic priorities for her second term (2025–2030): a focus on the right to participation in our democratic systems, with the goal of protecting the right to equitable and informed participation in democratic systems, and the right to the highest attainable standard of health. In addition to these two new strategic priorities, we will continue our work on three of the original priorities that still require our focus and where we can still make significant and tangible changes. Our new strategic plan will be published this fall.

Conclusion

In short, the *Human Rights Code*'s creation of the Human Rights Commissioner role has enabled significant progress on addressing systemic human rights issues in the province and allowed for important oversight over public bodies to ensure compliance with the *Code*. BCOHRC has become a respected and trusted resource for governments, employers and other duty bearers who seek to address inequities in their institutions, as well as for those seeking to have their rights upheld.

In the fall of 2025, the Commissioner will make submissions to the Committee about recommended changes to ss. 47.01 to 47.24 of the *Code*. Her recommendations will be aimed primarily at addressing some of the more technical issues we have encountered in the exercise of the Commissioner's legislative powers.

Overall, we will be seeking to remain stable as an organization without significant changes to the way we work. As a young organization, we have gone through a period of significant growth. Now is the time to consolidate those developments and continue to evolve as a stable, sustainable entity delivering effective oversight and services to promote and protect human rights in B.C.







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