

BUDGET 2023

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA | 2023-26

Ministry Business Plan Justice

Justice

Business Plan 2023-26

Ministry Fact Sheet – Mandate and Structure

The Ministry of Justice helps ensure that all Albertans have access to a fair and accessible justice system where the rule of law is upheld and government undertakings are administered according to law. Working alongside partners in the judiciary, law enforcement, public safety, and health, the ministry provides programs and services that ensure access to justice and support the needs of Albertans involved in the justice system.

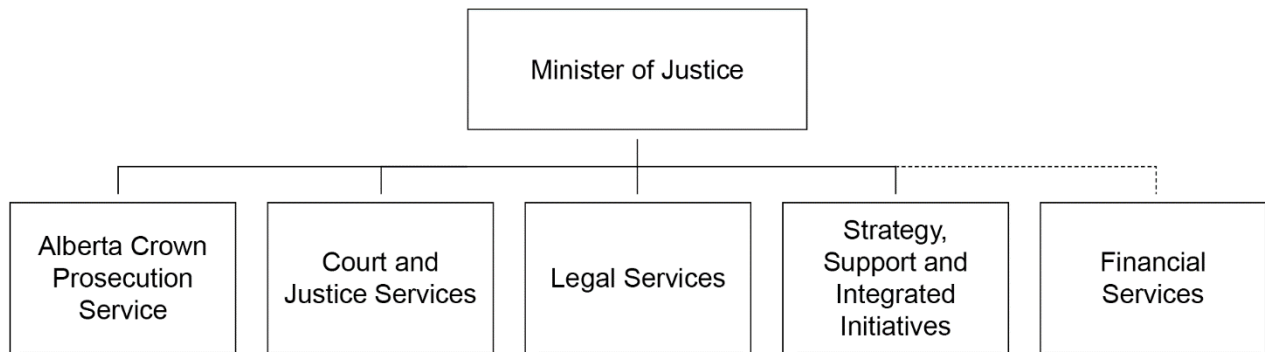
The ministry administers courts in Alberta and provides criminal prosecution services, information and dispute resolution options for people accessing the court system, and legal and related strategic services to government. It administers federal firearms legislation and advocates for Alberta's lawful firearms owners, including dedicated resources to partner with law enforcement. Alberta Justice oversees the delivery of legal aid to Albertans through an agreement with the Law Society of Alberta and Legal Aid Alberta. It also facilitates the enforcement of child and spousal support orders and provides forensic death investigations into sudden, unexpected or unexplained deaths in Alberta.

The ministry is taking active steps to protect the freedoms and interests of Albertans. It will publish legislation to protect Alberta from intrusive federal policies that infringe upon the province's sovereignty under Canada's constitution. It is standing up for Albertans by participating in legal challenges to federal legislation, including the federal government's use of the *Emergencies Act*, to protect Alberta's rights under the Canadian constitution and requesting intervener status to participate in legal hearings to combat the federal government's firearms ban. It will also advance work to constitutionally entrench the protection of property rights. Alberta Justice is working with the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services to review the delivery of policing services in the province, including further examination of an Alberta Police Service, to identify opportunities to increase frontline personnel in communities and better address the root causes of crime. The ministry is also advocating with the federal government for additional superior court justices in key areas across the province to ensure timely access to justice where Albertans live and work.

The ministry is striving to provide Albertans with more timely and accessible services. Alberta Justice continues to ensure timely investigations of firearms licence applications and continuous eligibility screening. Services are being modernized to ensure they remain accessible now and into the future. The use of technology, including virtual courts, digital filings and adjournments, is improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system. Alberta Justice will continue to invest in service digitization to transform the ways Albertans can interact with the justice system, and improve the availability of services for communities across the province. The ministry continues to improve efficiency by implementing Pre-Charge Assessment, which will remove files that do not meet the standard for prosecution prior to an Information being sworn. This policy ensures justice system participants, including police and prosecutors are focused on viable matters and will create capacity within Alberta's three independent courts. The ministry is working to reduce the impact of regulatory and administrative processes by undertaking a review of permit approvals to seek feasible opportunities to streamline processes and reduce wait times for Albertans. Opportunities to further enhance the death investigation process within the province are being explored.

The ministry is focused on providing services that target the unique needs of Albertans involved in the justice system. It is working with partners to develop alternatives to traditional judicial processes, including diversion and restorative justice programs, and specialized courts that provide a therapeutic and culturally appropriate approach to justice. Support for Indigenous people who are in contact with the justice system will continue with efforts by the ministry to provide culturally relevant programming and initiatives.

Fiscal sustainability is a government priority. Within the Ministry of Justice, various measures are being undertaken to ensure Albertans are receiving value for their tax dollars. The ministry continues to examine ways to deliver services cost-effectively while ensuring a sustainable, efficient justice system.



A more detailed description of the Ministry of Justice and its programs and initiatives can be found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/justice.aspx>

The Ministry of Justice remains committed to regulatory approaches and program delivery that reduces unnecessary government oversight and emphasizes outcomes, in order to improve access to government services, attract investment, support innovation and competitiveness, and grow Alberta businesses.

Ministry business plans should be considered in conjunction with all budget documents - including the Fiscal Plan, Government Strategic Plan, and Estimates - which work together to provide a complete overview of government’s commitment to responsible fiscal management.

2023-26 Business Plan

Outcome 1

Albertans' freedoms and interests are protected

The ministry advocates for and takes action to support a strong and free Alberta. By challenging federal legislation or policies that are unconstitutional or may be harmful to the province, the ministry is defending our province from federal overreach and supporting the best interests of Albertans.

Key Objectives

- 1.1 Take actions to stand up for Albertans, including improving firearms licence processing time and preparing legislation to protect provincial jurisdiction with respect to the regulation of firearms.
- 1.2 Take steps to ensure that Alberta’s constitutional areas of responsibility and Albertans’ Charter rights are not infringed upon.
- 1.3 Work with the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services to review the delivery of policing services in the province, including further examination of a provincial police service.

Initiatives Supporting Key Objectives

- In 2023-24, the ministry will invest over \$8 million to support the Alberta Chief Firearms Office's goal of keeping communities safe, which includes advocating for federal legislation that supports law-abiding firearms owners.

Performance Metrics

1.a Performance Measure: Percentage of Possession and Acquisition Licences (new and renewal) for different classes of firearms, including Restricted Possession and Acquisition that are processed through secondary and tertiary review by the Alberta Chief Firearms Office within the target timeline

This measures the effectiveness of the provincial firearms office in reviewing, investigating and completing these applications accounting for client court scheduling issues and capacity issues from unpredictability of extraordinary federal changes to legislation and associated regulations. The 2021-22 actual result was 45 per cent.

Targets	2023-24	60%	2024-25	80%	2025-26	90%
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Outcome 2

Alberta’s justice system is fair and accessible

Albertans deserve a justice system that is fair and accessible. The ministry is increasing the availability of online services and implementing a pre-charge assessment system across the province to improve access to justice for Albertans and ensure the appropriate and efficient use of justice system resources.

Key Objectives

- 2.1 Improve Albertans' access to justice and ensure a sustainable justice system that utilizes court and prosecution resources efficiently and effectively.
- 2.2 Continue to implement digital transformation to reduce administrative burden and improve Albertans’ access to justice, including increasing the availability of online services such as remote hearings.

Initiatives Supporting Key Objectives

- In 2023-24, the ministry will invest \$11 million into new and enhanced online services and digital platforms that will better meet the needs of citizens, court users, and the judiciary.
- In 2023-24, the ministry will invest \$20 million to enhance supports to the courts and court administration to ensure all Albertans have improved access to justice.

Performance Metrics

2.a Performance Measure: Provincial Court of Alberta lead time to trial for serious and violent matters

This is a direct measure of the Provincial Court’s availability to process these types of criminal cases. In 2021-22, the Provincial Court of Alberta’s lead time to trial for serious and violent matters was 26.8 weeks.

Targets	2023-24	24 weeks	2024-25	24 weeks	2025-26	24 weeks
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2.b Performance Measure: Number of court and justice services available online through Justice Digital

This measures the availability of new online court and justice services for Albertans and stakeholders. Services developed through Justice Digital and the Justice Transformation Initiative (such as electronic filing and adjournments, and online payment and dispute for traffic tickets) allow Albertans to manage their own interactions from any location, using any device. This reflects the ministry’s commitment to increasing online services, improving efficiencies of courts, and reducing red tape for Albertans. The targets are cumulative and reflect the total number of new online services introduced. In 2021-22, six new online services were made available through Justice Digital.

Targets	2023-24	12	2024-25	12	2025-26	12
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Outcome 3

Albertans are supported in their interactions with the justice system

The ministry is committed to improving support for Albertans during their interactions with the justice system. Recognizing the complex problems that can lead individuals down a path of crime, the ministry continues to support and grow targeted programs such as mental health and drug treatment courts that provide wrap around supports while holding offenders accountable. The ministry will employ strategies to improve services and supports to individuals, families, and victims to ensure they are supported in throughout their interactions with the justice system.

Key Objectives

- 3.1 Work with the courts and other stakeholders to develop options for individuals and families interacting with the justice system who could benefit from targeted services, interventions, and supports where appropriate.
- 3.2 Implement strategies to make the justice system more responsive to the needs of Albertans, including the use of restorative justice practices to help victims, offenders, and communities affected by conflict or crime reach reconciliation.
- 3.3 Work with the courts and other stakeholders to develop a new family justice strategy to improve services and supports to Albertans with legal family matters.
- 3.4 Implement enhancements to policies and procedures, and recruitment, to improve the death investigation process in Alberta.

Initiatives Supporting Key Objectives

- The ministry provides over \$1 million annually to fund the direct delivery of restorative justice programs and youth justice committees.
- In 2023-24, the ministry will invest \$5 million to support front end family resolution services such as pre-court assessment, mediation and parenting intervention programs to improve outcomes for Albertans with family legal matters.

Performance Metrics

3.a Performance Measure: Percentage of Office of the Chief Medical Examiner cases completed within 60 days

This measure demonstrates improvements to the death investigation process in Alberta. Progressive improvement in cases completed within 60 days demonstrates policy responsiveness to Alberta families who need answers and medical examiner reports about the death of their loved one. In 2021-22, the actual result was 10 per cent.

Targets	2023-24	20%	2024-25	40%	2025-26	60%
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STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

(thousands of dollars)

	Comparable		2023-24 Estimate	2024-25 Target	2025-26 Target
	2022-23 Budget	2022-23 Forecast			
REVENUE					
Transfers of Assets or Liabilities from Related Parties	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Transfers from Government of Canada	26,676	30,852	27,134	27,957	28,645
Investment Income	1,125	1,125	1,095	1,095	1,095
Other Premiums, Fees and Licences	26,660	26,260	26,780	26,780	26,780
Fines and Penalties	210,104	168,104	171,704	171,704	171,704
Maintenance Enforcement	16,593	16,593	16,593	16,593	16,593
Other Revenue	5,235	8,735	8,635	8,635	8,635
Ministry Total	290,393	255,669	255,941	256,764	257,452
Inter-Ministry Consolidation Adjustment	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)
Consolidated Total	286,393	251,669	251,941	252,764	253,452
EXPENSE					
Ministry Support Services	7,639	7,639	9,115	9,153	9,153
Court and Justice Services	216,695	247,981	260,395	260,798	261,153
Legal Services	45,613	45,613	65,833	66,158	66,158
Alberta Crown Prosecution Services	98,817	128,117	129,098	129,920	129,920
Strategy, Support and Integrated Initiatives	130,371	161,722	187,488	190,548	195,210
Alberta Human Rights	6,918	6,918	7,037	7,078	7,078
Ministry Total	506,053	597,990	658,966	663,655	668,672
Inter-Ministry Consolidation Adjustment	-	-	(513)	(684)	(684)
Consolidated Total	506,053	597,990	658,453	662,971	667,988
Net Operating Result	(219,660)	(346,321)	(406,512)	(410,207)	(414,536)
CAPITAL INVESTMENT					
Court and Justice Services	7,975	7,975	9,527	8,130	8,130
Alberta Crown Prosecution Services	2,380	2,380	1,000	500	500
Strategy, Support and Integrated Initiatives	11,119	13,119	11,289	1,289	289
Ministry Total	21,474	23,474	21,816	9,919	8,919
Inter-Ministry Consolidation Adjustment	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)
Consolidated Total	17,474	19,474	17,816	5,919	4,919