Systemic Investigation Update

HOLDING PATTERN:

Call Wait Times for Income and Disability Assistance

The Office of the Ombudsperson
B.C.'s Independent Voice for Fairness

40 years 1979-2019

Systemic Investigation Update
February 2020

INTRODUCTION

One of the key ways in which the Office of the Ombudsperson can effect change in the fair administration of government programs is by making recommendations. Our recommendations result from investigative findings of unfairness. In other words, when our investigation highlights a problem in fair administration, our recommendations aim to fix that problem. Our recommendations may involve individual remedies or systemic change, and often contain timelines by which we expect an authority to have made the change.

We monitor whether authorities are implementing the recommendations made in our public reports. As part of this monitoring commitment, we issue periodic updates on specific reports and their recommendations.

We begin monitoring implementation once a report is released publicly. We collect information from the authority about the steps they have taken to implement the recommendations. We expect the authority to provide us with specific, relevant and verifiable information about its implementation steps – a general commitment to take action is not sufficient. We then assess this information to determine whether, in our view, the recommendation is fully implemented.

HOLDING PATTERN REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

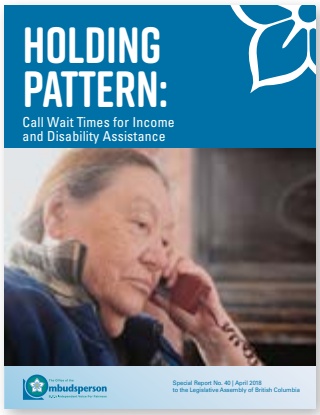
Holding Pattern: Call Wait Times for Income and Disability Assistance was released in April 2018. It was the result of our investigation into the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's centralized telephone system and its impact on the applicants and recipients of income and disability assistance.

The investigation was initiated in response to a range of complaints about long wait times, call time limits, restricted services and other accessibility challenges recipients of income and disability assistance faced in communicating with the ministry by telephone.

Generally, by the time people are accessing ministry services, they have exhausted all other financial resources and may lack regular access to basic communication tools, such as telephones or the Internet.

For some, these challenges come in addition to disability-related barriers to communication. Indeed, the majority of clients receiving ministry services have an identified physical and/or mental impairment affecting their ability to perform daily tasks independently.

The report found that call wait times at the ministry's provincial contact centre were chronically and consistently unreasonably long. Also, we found the ministry did not provide a reasonable level of service via its centralized telephone line, in part because it did not employ sufficient staff at the call centre, and because its mitigation strategies were unreasonable and created further delay in receiving ministry services.



Finally, given that some staff were being reassigned from in-person service to telephone service, we sought to assess whether the timeliness of in-person services had been impacted. In-person service remains an important option in the ministry's service delivery model, but we learned that there were no standards for in-person services and that the ministry did not systematically monitor its performance in this area. The report found this was unreasonable.

To address our findings, we made nine recommendations aimed at addressing staffing levels at the ministry, public transparency about telephone and in-person wait times, and the unreasonable strategy of deferring or underserving callers to mitigate excessive wait times.

The ministry accepted six recommendations, offered alternative commitments to two recommendations, and advised us that it did not have the technical capacity to meet one recommendation, monitoring in-person wait times. The following sections outline our monitoring of the recommendations over the time since the 2018 report was released.

IMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction has fully implemented four of the nine recommendations made in Holding Pattern. These recommendations were:

- **R1: By May 31, 2018, the ministry report the daily average speed of answer and the daily longest call wait time statistics on its website for each day in the previous month.**

In April 2018, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction began posting monthly "Daily Contact Centre Wait Times" reports on its website [1]. The reports identify the daily averages for shortest wait time, longest wait time, and average wait time based on data collected in 15-minute intervals. Additionally, as of September 2018, the ministry has included the daily percentage of calls answered within 10 minutes, and the percentage of calls answered or abandoned within 10 minutes. The latter figures reflect the ministry's publicly posted service standard and identify whether it is meeting its own target for timely phone service delivery [2]. Below we discuss the ministry's "Service Level" in more detail, and as it relates to Recommendation 3 of the report.

- **R4: Beginning May 31, 2018, the ministry report when the provincial contact centre is operating in Tier 1 mode by including an announcement on its centralized telephone line and posting on its website.**
- **R5: By March 31, 2019, the ministry phase out and cease to use its Tier 1 call-sweeping strategy, and any other strategies for reducing call wait times that result in reduced service levels, except in unforeseen and extraordinary circumstances such as provincial emergencies.**
- **R6: By March 31, 2020, the ministry phase out its practice of resolving only one request per call when people contact the centralized telephone line with multiple requests, so that it is able to resolve multiple issues while continuing to achieve the timeliness standards in Recommendation 3.**

The ministry has reported to us it replaced its Tier 1 Process by March 2018. Tier 1 was a process in which staff only took messages from callers to the centralized telephone line as a strategy to reduce call wait times when call volumes were high. In its stead, the ministry has since implemented "triage mode" where urgent requests are completed during the call and messages are taken for non-urgent requests. The ministry confirmed that when operating in triage mode a message is posted on the provincial "Access Income & Disability Assistance Services" information webpage notifying the public that due to high call volumes, only urgent requests will be responded to, and identifying other options for accessing ministry services[3]. Callers to the centralized telephone line receive a similar message and are advised that all other

[1] Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction Reports, "Daily Contact Centre Report" https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/social-development-poverty-reduction/ministry-reports

[2] Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, "Service Standards", poster: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/social-development-poverty-reduction/poster-service-standards.pdf

[3] Government of British Columbia- Family & Social Supports- Income Assistance- "Access Income & Disability Assistance Services" https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/income-assistance/access-services

non-urgent requests will be accepted and processed as soon as possible.

The ministry reported to us that it has not operated in triage mode since July 3, 2018, and intends to only use this service level in unforeseen and extraordinary circumstances. Further, that it had also ended the practice of resolving only one request per call as of July 2018, and in doing so, had fully implemented Recommendation 6. However, as noted below, the ministry still is not achieving the timeliness standards in Recommendation 3.

By eliminating the Tier 1 process, and based on the information provided to us about its use and notification to the public about the triage mode, the ministry has met its obligations as set out in Recommendations 4 and 5. Although we will cease monitoring Recommendation 6 in light of what the ministry has indicated is its practice outside of triage mode, we will continue to monitor Recommendation 3.

RECOMMENDATIONS WITH ONGOING MONITORING

- **R2: By October 31, 2018, the ministry hire sufficient additional employment and assistance workers to ensure that it has a minimum of 220 full-time staff dedicated to answering calls to the centralized telephone line. The incremental staffing is not to be offset from elsewhere in the ministry's income and disability assistance programs.**

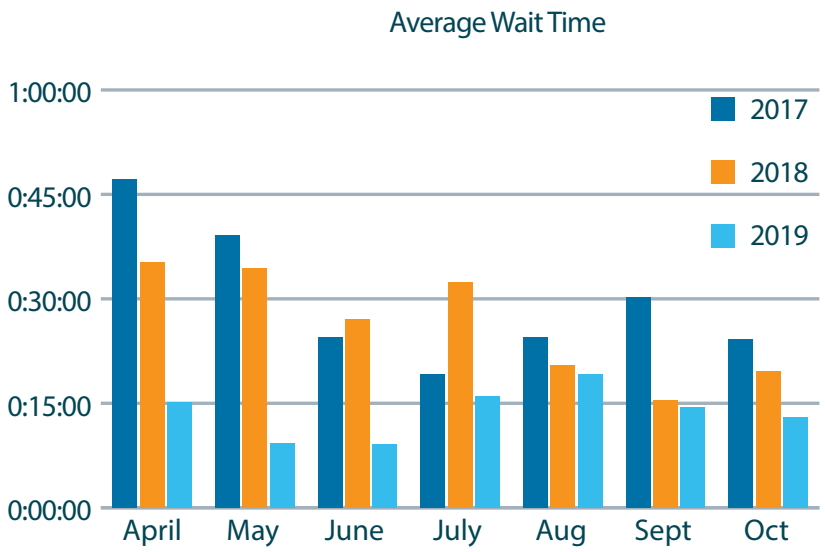
In British Columbia's 2018/19 – 2020/2021 Budget and Fiscal Plan the government committed a total of $6 million over three years to "increase staffing, reduce contact centre wait times, and help provide reliable and responsive service to people and families in need."[4] In March 2018, the ministry explained to us that this budget lift meant it would be able to hire an additional 30 staff, of which 20 would be dedicated to the centralized call centre. This meant the total number of staff dedicated to the centralized call centre would be just over 200, which does not meet our recommendation.

Since September 2018, the ministry has been piloting a work from home project for some of its staff, which aims to address challenges with call volumes and wait times on Mondays and Fridays as noted in the report, while allowing workers to take their earned days off during the week. It is positive the ministry has added workers to answer calls and is developing strategies to deal with call wait times during the busiest periods. However, we will continue to monitor this recommendation in conjunction with Recommendation 3, which deals specifically with call wait times.

- **R3: By March 31, 2019, for 95 percent of the days of each month, the ministry answer calls to the centralized telephone line at a daily average speed of answer of 10 minutes or less and attain a longest call wait time for each day of 30 minutes or less.**

This recommendation was based on our finding that the average call wait times were chronically and consistently unreasonably long. The ministry rejected this recommendation, and instead committed to answering 80% of calls to its centralized telephone line in 10 minutes or less, and identified this "Service Level" target as its standard for delivering services by phone.

[4] British Columbia Ministry of Finance. [2018] "Budget and Fiscal Plan 2018/19 – 2020/2021" https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2018/bfp/2018_Budget_and_Fiscal_Plan.pdf



Although the ministry's publicly reported figures for the months of April-October 2019 show significant improvements in reducing overall call wait times compared to these same months of the previous two years, there appear to be ongoing challenges in the ministry's ability to consistently meet an average speed of answer of 10 minutes or less.

How the ministry did compared to our recommendation

Since March 31, 2019, according to the contact centre daily reports, the percentage of days each month where calls to the ministry have been answered in 10 minutes or less is as follows:

April 2019: average speed of answer under 10 minutes: 70% of days
May 2019: average speed of answer under 10 minutes: 68% of days
June 2019: average speed of answer under 10 minutes: 65% of days
July 2019: average speed of answer under 10 minutes: 36% of days
August 2019: average speed of answer under 10 minutes: 33% of days
September 2019: average speed of answer under 10 minutes: 45% of days

The information also suggests some callers are still experiencing wait times in excess of 30 minutes, despite the overall downward trend in average monthly wait times:

April 2019: longest average call wait time of 30 minutes or less: 75% of days
May 2019: longest average call wait time of 30 minutes of less: 86% of days
June 2019: longest average call wait time of 30 minutes or less: 85% of days
July 2019: longest average call wait time of 30 minutes of less: 64% of days
August 2019: longest average call wait time of 30 minutes or less: 52% of days
September 2019: longest average call wait time of 30 minutes or less: 70% of days

How the ministry did compared to the target it set for itself

The ministry also appears to be struggling to achieve the target it set for itself of answering calls within 10 minutes or less 80% of the time.

April 2019: the ministry met its target: 10 out of 20 working days = 50%

May 2019: the ministry met its target: 12 out of 22 working days = 55%

June 2019: the ministry met its target: 8 out of 20 working days = 40%

July 2019: the ministry met its target: 1 out of 22 working days = 5%

August 2019: the ministry met its target: 5 out of 21 working days = 24%

September 2019: the ministry met its target: 5 out of 20 working days = 25%

While our office recognizes that improvement has been made as compared to previous years, in light of the current wait times and the ministry's failure to meet even the target it set for itself, we will continue to monitor this recommendation.

- **R7: By September 20, 2018, the ministry establish and make public service standards for the timeliness of service delivery and monitor wait times for in-person services at local offices.**
- **R8: By October 31, 2018, the ministry report on its website the average daily individual wait times for in-person service at every local office for the previous month.**

The ministry has yet to establish a service standard for in-person wait times. The ministry declined to accept Recommendation 8 which required the ministry to monitor in-person wait times, and now cites the fact that there is not yet a mechanism to track and report this information as the reason for why it has not yet set a service standard.

The ministry did note that local supervisors monitor in person wait times. The ministry has also begun to pilot a queue management system first used by Service BC, and has begun to track service delivery times in several offices. This system monitors how long it takes to service a customer from first contact with the front counter to when the service is complete. This pilot will be completed in the fall, and the ministry has committed to sharing the results with our office.

Further, the ministry advises us that it have also installed display monitors into all office waiting rooms. It currently provides information on services, such as reminders on key dates and options, but the ministry hopes to use the monitors to display wait times in the future. Our office will continue to monitor Recommendation 7.

- **R9: By June 30, 2019, June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021, the ministry make public the report of an independent performance audit of the ministry's public reporting of the performance information in Recommendation 1 and Recommendation 3 for the prior fiscal year.**

On June 17, 2019, the ministry published a report summarizing the results of an independent review of its "Call Wait Time Reports" for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019[5]. However this report was not the

[5] "Independent Review 2019 Call Wait Time Report": https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/social-development-poverty-reduction/2019-call-centre-review.pdf

independent audit report that had been done. Rather it was a summary of that report. The ministry has provided our Office with a copy of the full audit, and we are able to confirm that the full audit is consistent with the information in this public summary. We understand from the ministry that the full audit report is not available for publication because of the nature of the agreement between the ministry and the auditor. Such an audit conducted under CPA Standard 9100 can be published by the ministry if it provides so in its retainer agreement with the auditor. We expect them to do so for the audit report produced by June 30, 2020.

As a result, we do not accept this recommendation as complete. For future years, and in order to comply with the recommendation, the ministry ought to publish the full audit report publicly.

CONTACT CENTRE WAIT TIMES BY MONTH – 2019

The following information is taken from the ministry's monthly public reports[1]. They provide a snapshot of call wait times by month from April 2019 to October 2019.

Days in which three different timeliness targets were missed are highlighted as follows:

- this indicates days in which the ministry did not meet our recommendation that the longest call wait time be less than 30 minutes
- this indicates days in which the ministry did not meet our recommendation of an average wait time of less than 10 minutes
- this represents days in which the ministry did not meet its own target to answer all calls within 10 minutes 80% of the time

[1] Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction Reports, "Daily Contact Centre Report" https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/social-development-poverty-reduction/ministry-reports

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Daily Contact Centre Wait Times

April 2019

Date	Shortest Average Wait Time	Longest Average Wait Time	Average Wait Time	Service Level 1	Service Level 2
Monday, April 1, 2019	0:02:29	0:27:41	**0:15:04**	23.1%	20.1%
Tuesday, April 2, 2019	0:00:16	0:09:57	**0:03:38**	95.3%	93.6%
Wednesday, April 3, 2019	0:00:08	0:06:18	**0:01:31**	98.8%	95.3%
Thursday, April 4, 2019	0:00:08	0:05:13	**0:01:19**	98.6%	96.6%
Friday, April 5, 2019	0:00:12	0:15:03	**0:03:51**	91.0%	89.1%
Monday, April 8, 2019	0:00:11	0:20:23	**0:09:40**	55.3%	52.9%
Tuesday, April 9, 2019	0:00:05	0:09:38	**0:03:32**	96.2%	94.5%
Wednesday, April 10, 2019	0:00:05	0:13:39	**0:03:39**	89.8%	88.3%
Thursday, April 11, 2019	0:00:07	0:10:15	**0:03:48**	94.5%	92.8%
Friday, April 12, 2019	0:00:38	0:13:01	**0:04:49**	92.0%	89.5%
Monday, April 15, 2019	0:00:18	0:20:35	**0:08:48**	70.2%	67.8%
Tuesday, April 16, 2019	0:00:06	0:08:45	**0:03:33**	97.5%	95.6%
Wednesday, April 17, 2019	0:00:09	0:05:12	**0:01:37**	99.0%	97.2%
Thursday, April 18, 2019	0:01:15	0:16:12	**0:06:31**	73.0%	70.8%
Friday, April 19, 2019 - STAT	-	-	**-**	-	-
Monday, April 22, 2019 - STAT	-	-	**-**	-	-
Tuesday, April 23, 2019*	0:04:46	1:40:01	**1:15:12**	9.4%	2.7%
Wednesday, April 24, 2019*	0:00:19	1:08:22	**0:48:01**	11.4%	6.0%
Thursday, April 25, 2019*	0:00:11	0:51:43	**0:31:08**	12.7%	8.3%
Friday, April 26, 2019*	0:03:39	1:03:53	**0:42:53**	8.9%	3.5%
Monday, April 29, 2019	0:02:52	0:41:41	**0:27:11**	8.4%	4.4%
Tuesday, April 30, 2019	0:02:27	0:11:38	**0:07:01**	80.7%	78.5%

*Cheque issue week

Definition of Terms	
Shortest Average Wait Time	Shortest average time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff (data collected in 15 minute intervals)
Longest Average Wait Time	Longest average time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff (data collected in 15 minute intervals)
Average Wait Time	The average amount of time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff
Service Level 1	The percentage of calls answered, or abandoned, within 10 minutes
Service Level 2	The percentage of calls answered within 10 minutes

BRITISH COLUMBIA

- Days in which longest average wait time is longer than 30 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)
- Average wait times longer than 10 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)
- Days in which less than 80% of calls were answered within 10 minutes (ministry commitment)

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Daily Contact Centre Wait Times

May 2019

Date	Shortest Average Wait Time	Longest Average Wait Time	Average Wait Time	Service Level 1	Service Level 2
Wednesday, May 1, 2019	0:00:06	0:11:05	**0:04:18**	87.9%	86.4%
Thursday, May 2, 2019	0:00:10	0:19:45	**0:05:20**	84.1%	82.2%
Friday, May 3, 2019	0:01:26	0:24:22	**0:10:35**	52.1%	50.3%
Monday, May 6, 2019	0:01:04	0:20:18	**0:11:08**	35.2%	32.5%
Tuesday, May 7, 2019	0:00:07	0:07:08	**0:02:02**	98.4%	97.0%
Wednesday, May 8, 2019	0:00:06	0:11:02	**0:02:30**	93.4%	91.9%
Thursday, May 9, 2019	0:00:07	0:09:10	**0:03:02**	95.9%	94.3%
Friday, May 10, 2019	0:00:06	0:12:11	**0:04:08**	90.8%	89.2%
Monday, May 13, 2019	0:00:10	0:15:58	**0:06:23**	75.2%	73.2%
Tuesday, May 14, 2019	0:00:06	0:09:40	**0:02:22**	97.4%	96.3%
Wednesday, May 15, 2019	0:00:12	0:08:45	**0:03:56**	96.1%	94.6%
Thursday, May 16, 2019	0:00:06	0:07:21	**0:02:48**	98.7%	97.1%
Friday, May 17, 2019	0:00:13	0:08:18	**0:03:45**	97.9%	96.0%
Monday, May 20, 2019 - STAT	-	-	**-**	-	-
Tuesday, May 21, 2019*	0:03:02	0:51:16	**0:30:55**	9.0%	4.2%
Wednesday, May 22, 2019*	0:00:59	0:50:56	**0:33:33**	13.2%	8.5%
Thursday, May 23, 2019*	0:00:07	0:23:02	**0:11:40**	37.7%	35.5%
Friday, May 24, 2019*	0:03:25	0:50:03	**0:32:44**	8.2%	4.0%
Monday, May 27, 2019	0:03:02	0:25:49	**0:16:34**	14.4%	11.1%
Tuesday, May 28, 2019	0:01:32	0:14:14	**0:06:46**	79.1%	77.3%
Wednesday, May 29, 2019	0:01:01	0:12:14	**0:04:47**	89.3%	87.5%
Thursday, May 30, 2019	0:00:08	0:10:59	**0:03:16**	94.7%	93.3%
Friday, May 31, 2019	0:00:16	0:12:08	**0:06:28**	78.3%	76.1%

*Cheque issue week

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Service Level 1	The percentage of calls answered, or abandoned, within 10 minutes
Service Level 2	The percentage of calls answered within 10 minutes

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Days in which longest average wait time is longer than 30 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)

Average wait times longer than 10 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)

Days in which less than 80% of calls were answered within 10 minutes (ministry commitment)

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Daily Contact Centre Wait Times

June 2019

Date	Shortest Average Wait Time	Longest Average Wait Time	Average Wait Time	Service Level 1	Service Level 2
Monday, June 3, 2019	0:02:43	0:31:51	**0:16:55**	16.5%	12.6%
Tuesday, June 4, 2019	0:00:22	0:17:40	**0:06:07**	79.3%	77.0%
Wednesday, June 5, 2019	0:00:08	0:11:45	**0:04:35**	90.9%	89.4%
Thursday, June 6, 2019	0:00:09	0:20:29	**0:06:57**	76.6%	74.3%
Friday, June 7, 2019	0:02:11	0:20:36	**0:10:25**	51.3%	48.9%
Monday, June 10, 2019	0:00:19	0:23:46	**0:12:55**	27.6%	25.2%
Tuesday, June 11, 2019	0:00:07	0:11:55	**0:02:57**	93.1%	91.5%
Wednesday, June 12, 2019	0:00:06	0:06:31	**0:02:35**	96.9%	95.4%
Thursday, June 13, 2019	0:00:12	0:12:01	**0:04:15**	92.2%	90.4%
Friday, June 14, 2019	0:00:16	0:16:29	**0:06:18**	76.1%	74.0%
Monday, June 17, 2019	0:01:44	0:27:13	**0:12:22**	42.1%	39.1%
Tuesday, June 18, 2019	0:00:23	0:17:17	**0:04:18**	87.4%	85.5%
Wednesday, June 19, 2019	0:00:20	0:17:07	**0:04:26**	88.9%	87.1%
Thursday, June 20, 2019	0:00:12	0:18:24	**0:04:06**	85.3%	83.8%
Friday, June 21, 2019	0:00:19	0:16:46	**0:05:39**	85.9%	83.9%
Monday, June 24, 2019*	0:01:05	0:15:54	**0:07:10**	77.2%	75.1%
Tuesday, June 25, 2019*	0:00:05	0:20:13	**0:05:29**	80.4%	78.6%
Wednesday, June 26, 2019*	0:00:06	0:42:24	**0:27:08**	16.1%	12.3%
Thursday, June 27, 2019*	0:00:06	0:28:19	**0:11:56**	37.8%	35.4%
Friday, June 28, 2019*	0:03:13	0:41:49	**0:26:28**	9.5%	5.4%

*Cheque issue week

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Average Wait Time	The average amount of time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff
Service Level 1	The percentage of calls answered, or abandoned, within 10 minutes
Service Level 2	The percentage of calls answered within 10 minutes

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Days in which longest average wait time is longer than 30 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)

Average wait times longer than 10 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)

Days in which less than 80% of calls were answered within 10 minutes (ministry commitment)

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Daily Contact Centre Wait Times

July 2019

Date	Shortest Average Wait Time	Longest Average Wait Time	Average Wait Time	Service Level 1	Service Level 2
Monday, July 1, 2019 - STAT	-	-	-	-	-
Tuesday, July 2, 2019	0:03:22	1:04:07	**0:44:56**	9.3%	3.3%
Wednesday, July 3, 2019	0:03:04	0:27:51	**0:12:50**	32.3%	29.5%
Thursday July 4, 2019	0:02:07	0:23:55	**0:11:49**	47.8%	44.8%
Friday, July 5, 2019	0:02:22	0:40:45	**0:22:22**	8.7%	5.5%
Monday, July 8, 2019	0:02:46	0:35:49	**0:19:16**	8.3%	5.2%
Tuesday, July 9, 2019	0:00:19	0:17:21	**0:06:57**	75.6%	73.6%
Wednesday, July 10, 2019	0:00:09	0:19:38	**0:05:43**	81.5%	79.9%
Thursday, July 11, 2019	0:00:24	0:21:37	**0:05:26**	82.5%	81.0%
Friday, July 12, 2019	0:02:00	0:22:13	**0:11:51**	42.2%	39.6%
Monday, July 15, 2019	0:02:46	0:31:29	**0:17:23**	20.7%	17.3%
Tuesday, July 16, 2019	0:00:10	0:14:18	**0:06:58**	77.5%	74.9%
Wednesday, July 17, 2019	0:00:09	0:14:41	**0:06:18**	77.3%	75.1%
Thursday, July 18, 2019	0:00:08	0:17:13	**0:06:19**	74.2%	72.3%
Friday, July 19, 2019	0:02:55	0:51:21	**0:28:42**	8.6%	4.5%
Monday, July 22, 2019*	0:03:16	0:23:36	**0:15:13**	11.5%	9.1%
Tuesday, July 23, 2019*	0:01:38	0:19:51	**0:09:15**	61.0%	58.8%
Wednesday, July 24, 2019*	0:00:15	0:51:01	**0:30:40**	14.0%	9.9%
Thursday, July 25, 2019*	0:00:07	0:26:27	**0:13:52**	35.7%	33.4%
Friday, July 26, 2019*	0:03:16	0:47:19	**0:28:32**	8.8%	4.6%
Monday, July 29, 2019	0:03:18	0:45:50	**0:28:14**	9.8%	5.6%
Tuesday, July 30, 2019	0:02:49	0:26:53	**0:13:10**	38.2%	36.0%
Wednesday, July 31, 2019	0:00:15	0:16:58	**0:07:29**	71.9%	70.1%

*Cheque issue week

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Shortest Average Wait Time	Shortest average time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff (data collected in 15 minute intervals)
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Average Wait Time	The average amount of time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff
Service Level 1	The percentage of calls answered, or abandoned, within 10 minutes
Service Level 2	The percentage of calls answered within 10 minutes

BRITISH COLUMBIA

- Days in which longest average wait time is longer than 30 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)
- Average wait times longer than 10 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)
- Days in which less than 80% of calls were answered within 10 minutes (ministry commitment)

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Daily Contact Centre Wait Times

August 2019

Date	Shortest Average Wait Time	Longest Average Wait Time	Average Wait Time	Service Level 1	Service Level 2
Thursday, August 1, 2019	0:02:39	0:23:10	**0:09:50**	53.0%	51.0%
Friday, August 2, 2019	0:02:52	0:53:20	**0:30:38**	8.2%	4.2%
Monday, August 5, 2019 – STAT	–	–	–	–	–
Tuesday, August 6, 2019	0:03:41	1:20:30	**0:59:40**	9.6%	2.5%
Wednesday, August 7, 2019	0:03:18	0:45:42	**0:26:11**	8.4%	4.0%
Thursday, August 8, 2019	0:01:47	0:26:47	**0:13:33**	32.3%	29.7%
Friday, August 9, 2019	0:01:38	0:41:03	**0:21:54**	24.4%	20.7%
Monday, August 12, 2019	0:03:03	1:06:18	**0:39:31**	8.5%	3.6%
Tuesday, August 13, 2019	0:02:19	0:20:57	**0:11:42**	33.7%	30.6%
Wednesday, August 14, 2019	0:00:21	0:19:44	**0:08:51**	56.0%	54.2%
Thursday, August 15, 2019	0:00:09	0:08:50	**0:04:50**	94.4%	92.2%
Friday, August 16, 2019	0:02:14	0:33:55	**0:21:38**	14.5%	10.4%
Monday, August 19, 2019*	0:03:03	0:34:51	**0:22:51**	8.9%	5.2%
Tuesday, August 20, 2019*	0:00:19	0:16:11	**0:05:37**	84.8%	83.3%
Wednesday, August 21, 2019*	0:00:10	0:43:50	**0:27:14**	15.0%	11.0%
Thursday, August 22, 2019*	0:00:08	0:21:52	**0:10:08**	48.0%	45.8%
Friday, August 23, 2019*	0:02:47	0:24:34	**0:15:50**	14.5%	10.5%
Monday, August 26, 2019	0:02:47	0:38:41	**0:24:34**	9.7%	5.8%
Tuesday, August 27, 2019	0:00:07	0:13:44	**0:06:02**	82.0%	80.7%
Wednesday, August 28, 2019	0:00:08	0:09:33	**0:04:23**	95.4%	93.8%
Thursday, August 29, 2019	0:00:15	0:13:30	**0:04:45**	86.0%	84.6%
Friday, August 30, 2019	0:03:16	0:39:51	**0:24:04**	8.1%	4.2%

*Cheque issue week

Definition of Terms	
Average Wait Time	The average amount of time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff
Shortest Average Wait Time	Shortest average time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff (data collected in 15 minute intervals)
Longest Average Wait Time	Longest average time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff (data collected in 15 minute intervals)
Service Level 1	The percentage of calls answered, or abandoned, within 10 minutes
Service Level 2	The percentage of calls answered within 10 minutes

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Days in which longest average wait time is longer than 30 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)

Average wait times longer than 10 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)

Days in which less than 80% of calls were answered within 10 minutes (ministry commitment)

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Daily Contact Centre Wait Times

September 2019

Date	Shortest Average Wait Time	Longest Average Wait Time	Average Wait Time	Service Level 1	Service Level 2
Monday, September 2, 2019 – STAT	–	–	–	–	–
Tuesday, September 3, 2019	0:03:34	1:03:31	**0:43:52**	8.0%	2.0%
Wednesday, September 4, 2019	0:01:21	0:19:56	**0:08:11**	63.6%	61.6%
Thursday, September 5, 2019	0:01:50	0:25:44	**0:13:17**	34.4%	31.5%
Friday, September 6, 2019	0:01:56	0:32:07	**0:19:35**	15.4%	11.4%
Monday, September 9, 2019	0:02:55	0:45:09	**0:30:52**	8.6%	4.3%
Tuesday, September 10, 2019	0:00:45	0:14:23	**0:06:48**	74.1%	72.0%
Wednesday, September 11, 2019	0:00:07	0:11:36	**0:03:00**	92.6%	91.4%
Thursday, September 12, 2019	0:00:08	0:16:33	**0:05:05**	82.4%	80.5%
Friday, September 13, 2019	0:00:13	0:14:37	**0:07:56**	69.6%	67.6%
Monday, September 16, 2019	0:02:48	0:28:00	**0:16:52**	10.6%	7.5%
Tuesday, September 17, 2019	0:00:15	0:22:23	**0:10:40**	37.3%	35.0%
Wednesday, September 18, 2019	0:00:19	0:12:39	**0:04:45**	91.4%	90.0%
Thursday, September 19, 2019	0:00:25	0:13:44	**0:05:10**	86.3%	84.8%
Friday, September 20, 2019	0:02:30	0:22:09	**0:10:08**	50.3%	47.6%
Monday, September 23, 2019*	0:00:29	0:16:36	**0:06:34**	81.6%	80.1%
Tuesday, September 24, 2019*	0:00:06	0:16:53	**0:05:42**	74.3%	72.8%
Wednesday, September 25, 2019*	0:00:07	0:37:38	**0:23:13**	23.3%	19.5%
Thursday, September 26, 2019*	0:00:07	0:25:41	**0:11:32**	37.5%	35.3%
Friday, September 27, 2019*	0:03:37	0:45:50	**0:32:30**	7.9%	2.9%
Monday, September 30, 2019	0:03:20	0:42:32	**0:30:49**	8.1%	3.2%

*Cheque issue week

Definition of Terms	
Average Wait Time	The average amount of time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff
Shortest Average Wait Time	Shortest average time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff (data collected in 15 minute intervals)
Longest Average Wait Time	Longest average time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff (data collected in 15 minute intervals)
Service Level 1	The percentage of calls answered, or abandoned, within 10 minutes
Service Level 2	The percentage of calls answered within 10 minutes

BRITISH COLUMBIA

- Days in which longest average wait time is longer than 30 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)
- Average wait times longer than 10 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)
- Days in which less than 80% of calls were answered within 10 minutes (ministry commitment)

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Daily Contact Centre Wait Times

October 2019

Date	Shortest Average Wait Time	Longest Average Wait Time	Average Wait Time	Service Level 1	Service Level 2
Tuesday, October 1, 2019	0:02:28	0:17:59	**0:07:53**	75.7%	74.1%
Wednesday, October 2, 2019	0:00:06	0:18:40	**0:08:35**	62.2%	60.2%
Thursday, October 03, 2019	0:00:08	0:15:52	**0:04:29**	87.1%	85.7%
Friday, October 4, 2019	0:00:31	0:19:29	**0:07:37**	64.6%	62.9%
Monday, October 7, 2019	0:00:11	0:25:32	**0:13:49**	16.8%	14.5%
Tuesday, October 8, 2019	0:00:09	0:12:36	**0:04:25**	85.1%	83.6%
Wednesday, October 9, 2019	0:00:06	0:13:46	**0:05:38**	76.6%	75.0%
Thursday, October 10, 2019	0:00:07	0:18:25	**0:05:13**	84.3%	81.9%
Friday, October 11, 2019	0:03:00	0:25:46	**0:13:50**	19.5%	17.2%
Monday, October 14, 2019 - STAT	-	-	**-**	-	-
Tuesday, October 15, 2019	0:02:55	0:55:50	**0:37:33**	8.2%	3.5%
Wednesday, October 16, 2019	0:01:05	0:14:26	**0:07:42**	71.3%	69.4%
Thursday, October 17, 2019	0:00:06	0:14:09	**0:05:49**	77.1%	75.4%
Friday, October 18, 2019	0:02:46	0:36:10	**0:20:48**	9.4%	5.0%
Monday, October 21, 2019*	0:02:30	0:31:57	**0:16:47**	11.3%	8.7%
Tuesday, October 22, 2019*	0:00:29	0:19:49	**0:09:08**	55.4%	51.9%
Wednesday, October 23, 2019*	0:00:08	0:44:33	**0:22:06**	17.8%	10.2%
Thursday, October 24, 2019*	0:00:07	0:17:20	**0:08:18**	57.8%	55.1%
Friday, October 25, 2019*	0:02:22	0:57:15	**0:35:56**	13.9%	4.7%
Monday, October 28, 2019	0:02:38	0:56:11	**0:35:13**	13.8%	5.4%
Tuesday, October 29, 2019	0:01:00	0:11:49	**0:05:13**	91.8%	89.8%
Wednesday, October 30, 2019	0:00:14	0:12:07	**0:04:12**	94.1%	92.7%
Thursday, October 31, 2019	0:00:06	0:05:03	**0:01:24**	99.0%	98.4%

*Cheque issue week

Definition of Terms	
Average Wait Time	The average amount of time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff
Shortest Average Wait Time	Shortest average time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff (data collected in 15 minute intervals)
Longest Average Wait Time	Longest average time between when the call was received and the caller was connected to staff (data collected in 15 minute intervals)
Service Level 1	The percentage of calls answered, or abandoned, within 10 minutes
Service Level 2	The percentage of calls answered within 10 minutes

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Days in which longest average wait time is longer than 30 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)

Average wait times longer than 10 minutes (Ombudsperson recommendation)

Days in which less than 80% of calls were answered within 10 minutes (ministry commitment)

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS HIGHLIGHTED IN UPDATE

R1	By May 31, 2018, the ministry report the daily average speed of answer and the daily longest call wait time statistics on its website for each day in the previous month.	***Fully implemented***
R2	By October 31, 2018, the ministry hire sufficient additional employment and assistance workers to ensure that it has a minimum of 220 full-time staff dedicated to answering calls to the centralized telephone line. The incremental staffing is not to be offset from elsewhere in the ministry's income and disability assistance programs.	***Not Accepted***
Ministry commitment in lieu of R2	The ministry hired an additional 30 new employment and assistance workers, with 20 being being allocated to the phones, and committed to meeting service standards.	***Ongoing***
R3	By March 31, 2019, for 95 percent of the days of each month, the ministry answer calls to the centralized telephone line at a daily average speed of answer of 10 minutes or less and attain a longest call wait time for each day of 30 minutes or less.	***Not Accepted***
Ministry commitment in lieu of R3	This ministry modified recommendation 2 and committed to answering 80% of calls in 10 minutes or less.	***Ongoing***
R4	Beginning May 31, 2018, the ministry report when the provincial contact centre is operating in Tier 1 mode by including an announcement on its centralized telephone line and posting on its website.	***Fully implemented***
R5	By March 31, 2019, the ministry phase out and cease to use its Tier 1 call-sweeping strategy, and any other strategies for reducing call wait times that result in reduced service levels, except in unforeseen and extraordinary circumstances such as provincial emergencies.	***Fully implemented***
R6	By March 31, 2020, the ministry phase out its practice of resolving only one request per call when people contact the centralized telephone line with multiple requests, so that it is able to resolve multiple issues while continuing to achieve the timeliness standards in Recommendation 3.	***Fully implemented***

R7	By September 30, 2018, the ministry establish and make public service standards for the timeliness of service delivery and monitor wait times for in-person services at all local offices.	***Ongoing***
R8	By October 31, 2018, the ministry report on its website the average daily individual wait time for in-person service at every local office for the previous month.	***Not Accepted***
R9	By June 30, 2019, June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021, the ministry make public the report of an independent performance audit of the ministry's public reporting of the performance information in Recommendation 1 and Recommendation 3 for the prior fiscal year.	***Ongoing***

The Office of the

Ombudsperson

B.C's Independent Voice for Fairness

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