

# BC STATS SERVICE PLAN

2009/10 - 2011/12

June 2009



BCStats





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### BC STATS – Program Summary

#### MISSION:

BC STATS is a service-driven organization providing timely and reliable statistical information and analysis to provincial government departments on the economic, social and demographic conditions of the province and its people.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- BC STATS operates under the legal authority of the *British Columbia Statistics Act*.
- A central statistical agency has existed within the provincial government for over 110 years.

#### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- To provide statistical information and analysis for informed decision-making and policy development within the provincial government.
- To co-ordinate statistical activities within government and between the Government of British Columbia and other governments.
- To promote the quality, coherence and inter/intra government comparability of statistical systems in accordance with sound scientific standards and practices.

#### CUSTOMERS/CLIENTS

- **Primary Client Groups:** Government ministries; Statistics Canada.
- **Other Client Groups:** Crown corporations; public agencies (all levels of government); business community; overseas investors; and the public.

#### OPERATIONAL INFORMATION:

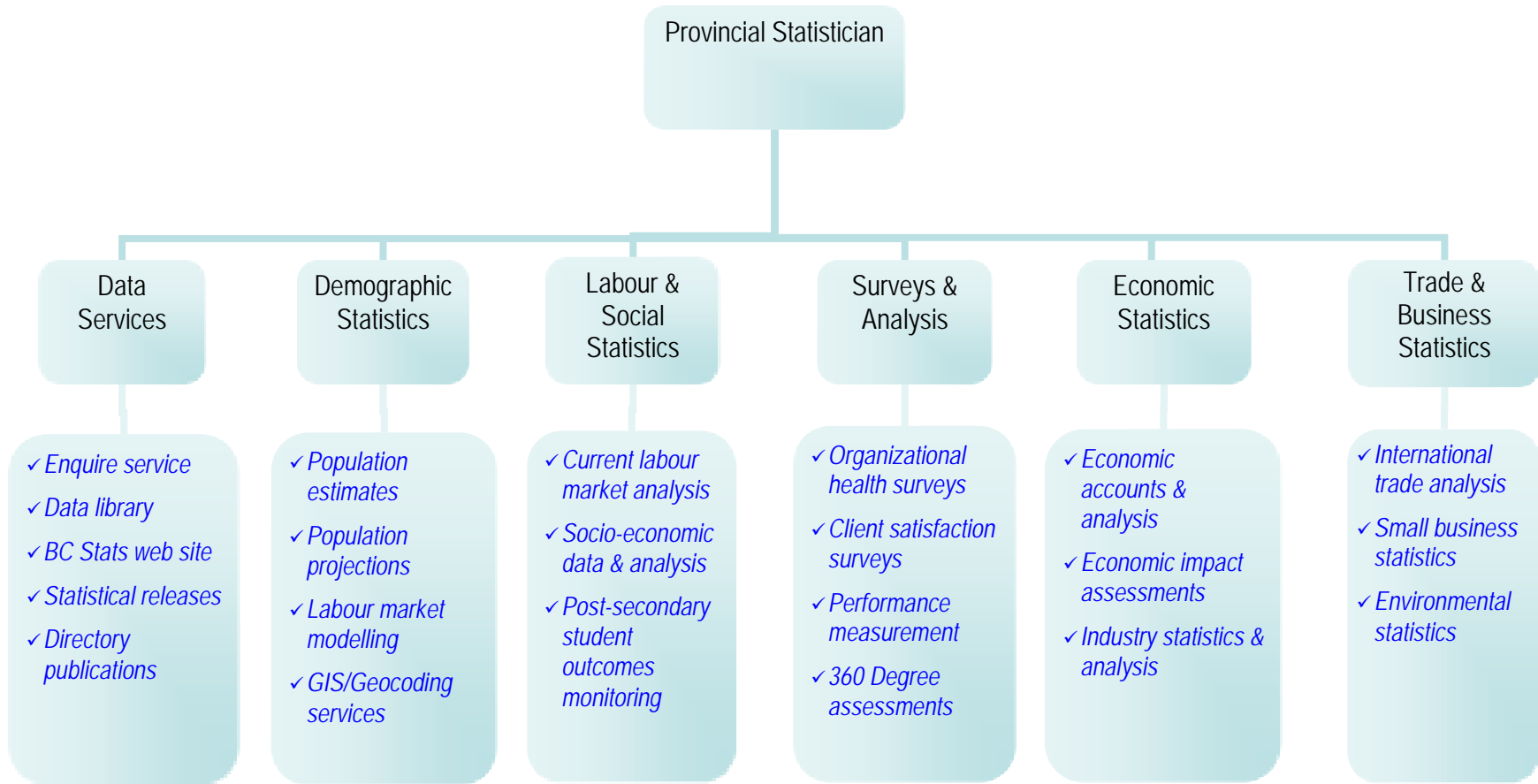
**Management:** Don McRae, Executive Director/Provincial Statistician

#### Voted Appropriation (\$Millions):

2007/08	2007/08	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
\$1.184	\$1.333	\$1.192	\$1.192	\$1.192

**FTE's 2009/2010:** 54

**Location:** Victoria



**Resource Utilization\***

7%

11%

31%

38%

5%

3%

\*Centralized Support 5%

## **Corporate Overview**

### **WHO WE ARE**

BC STATS is the central statistical agency for the province of British Columbia and operates under the authority of the *British Columbia Statistics Act*. The legislation empowers the agency to plan, promote, develop, present and disseminate integrated social and economic statistics relating to the province and its people.

### **RELATIONSHIP OF BC STATS TO THE REST OF GOVERNMENT**

The Government of British Columbia has chosen a middle path between centralization and dispersal of statistical activities within government. It has established a statistical agency (BC STATS), and provided the legal, financial and administrative framework necessary for the development of statistical products, services and expertise within government. This central facility is augmented by planning, research, analysis and data collection activities in other ministries that are intended to complement, but not duplicate, the services provided by BC STATS.

The semi-centralized nature of statistical activities within the provincial government has shaped the corporate philosophy as well as activities of BC STATS. The Agency provides some level of service to virtually every ministry in government, and those services are provided by mutual consent. The extent to which other ministries use BC STATS services depends on a number of factors ranging from a more efficient use of resources to a lack of in-house expertise.

### **WHAT IS OUR BUSINESS?**

BC STATS is in the business of providing government with statistical information and analytical services to support informed decision-making and policy development. As noted earlier, the Agency's role is not unique within government. Hence, supporting this function the Agency maintains both a collaborative and co-ordinating role within the provincial government, and with statistical agencies of other governments, on matters regarding statistical activity and policy.

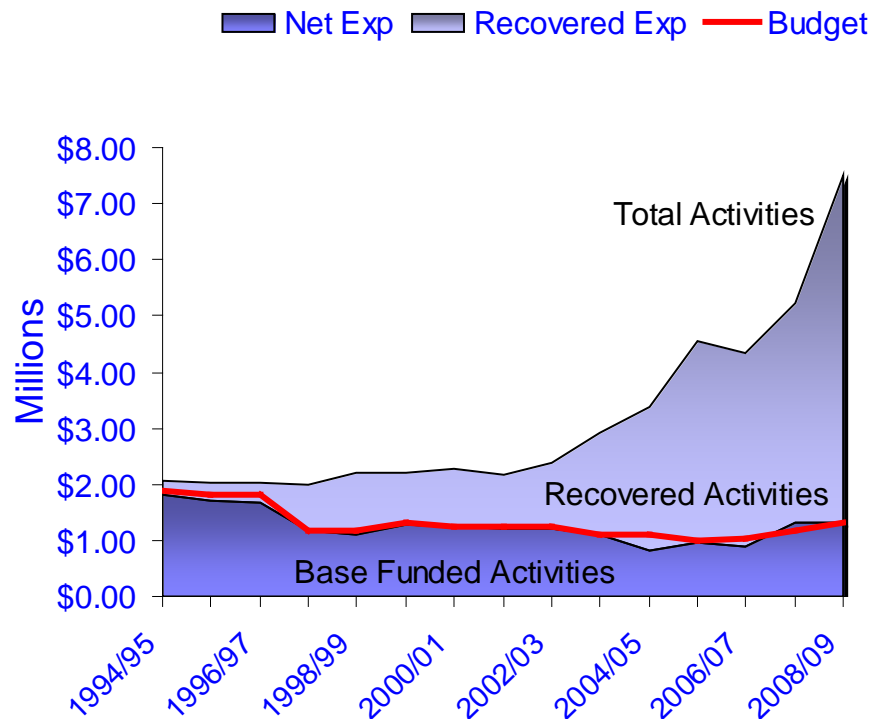
### **WHO ARE OUR CLIENTS AND WHAT DO THEY RECEIVE?**

The primary client group for BC STATS products and services is the provincial government and where resources are available, provincial crown corporations and agencies, local governments, the business community and the public. The statistical and analytic needs of clients fall into three broad categories:

- ❑ budgetary and planning
- ❑ public policy formulation
- ❑ performance measurement

### BC STATS RESOURCES

BC STATS has an approved 2009/10 base budget of \$1.2 million and 54 full time equivalent positions. As the resources currently available within BC STATS are not sufficient to meet the demand from within government for statistical services, the Agency regularly develops analytical and data development partnerships with clients on a full or partial cost-recovery basis. The dependence on outside funding for statistical activities has increased over the last decade and currently represents over 80% of gross operating expenditures.



### WHAT SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY BC STATS?

Some of the specific services provided by BC STATS include:

- ❑ **Briefing Material for Government Officials.** We maintain a statistical release program for policy makers and senior government officials accessible in paper and electronic format. This program provides comprehensive up-to-date coverage of key economic, social and demographic indicators for the province with comparisons to performance in Canada and the other provinces.
- ❑ **Economic Impact Assessments.** The British Columbia economic impact assessment models developed by BC STATS have a solid track record in providing decision-makers with detailed analysis of the impact of public and private investment decisions or changes in policy on provincial, regional and local economic growth and tax revenues.

- ❑ **British Columbia Economic Accounts.** BC STATS maintains a complete set of Income, Expenditure and Industry based economic accounts for the Province of British Columbia. The British Columbia Economic Accounts is the primary data input to the British Columbia Econometric and Policy Simulation Model maintained by the Ministry of Finance. This model of the BC economy is used by the Minister of Finance to assess the impact and interaction of economic and fiscal stimuli.
- ❑ **British Columbia Sector Economic Accounts.** In addition to monitoring output measures such as GDP and employment for the standard industries operating in the province, the Agency maintains a program of special economic accounts measuring the output of non-standard sectors such as Tourism, High Technology and Small Business. Some of these non-standard industries are emerging as drivers in the new economy and require monitoring to ensure effective policy formulation.
- ❑ **Protecting Transfer Payments to British Columbia.** Statistics Canada produces nearly all of the data used in the formulas that determine cash transfers to the provinces under the *Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangement Act*, the source of about \$4.9 billion in revenues to British Columbia. BC STATS actively promotes British Columbia's interests on statistical issues with potential transfer payment impacts through regular interaction with officials at Statistics Canada and through various federal-provincial-territorial statistical committees chaired by Statistics Canada.
- ❑ **Provincial and Regional Labour Market and Socio-economic Conditions.** Variation in regional economic activity has resulted in divergent levels of social prosperity within the province creating a need for regionally unique policy responses. BC STATS supports this function by developing statistical information and analysis at the regional level on labour force and job creation, income levels and sources of income, incidence of poverty, levels and characteristics of social assistance, educational attainment, crime and health. Monitoring measures of regional stress over time enables policy makers to evaluate the effectiveness of programs put in place to close the prosperity gap between regions.
- ❑ **Monitoring, Forecasting and Analyzing Demographic Developments.** The reality of reduced fiscal capacity for action has forced governments to plan more effectively how services are delivered. As a result, provincial and regional demographic and socio-economic issues have assumed a much greater profile for most governments in recent years and British Columbia is no exception. BC STATS has been proactive in this area, developing information programs with relevance to the planning and budgeting activities of key social ministries. One such program is our regional demographic estimates and projection program. BC STATS has been instrumental in maximizing valuable data sources to develop current and comprehensive sets of demographic estimates and projections by age and

gender at the regional and provincial levels, enabling policy analysts and program managers to make informed decisions with respect to current and future service delivery.

- ❑ **Workplace Environment Survey.** BC STATS developed and maintains a comprehensive assessment of workplace engagement among public sector employees. The BC Government Corporate Human Resources Plan describes a vision for the BC Public Service as: *“ensuring the BC Public Service has the capacity (leadership, motivation, skills and training) to keep pace with social, economic, and technological changes and deliver quality services to an increasingly diverse population.”* In order to accomplish this vision, public service executives and managers need to make effective decisions about all of their investments, but most particularly their investments in human resources. Ensuring that employees are engaged in their work increases productivity and innovation, builds organizational resilience, and ensures government can continue to recruit and retain talented employees. The Workplace Environment Program developed and maintained by BC STATS is an essential element to achieving this goal.
- ❑ **Program Performance Measurement.** Program accountability is an increasingly important function within the public sector and key to accountability is the development of performance measures at the program level. BC STATS provides start-to-finish survey and analysis services by web, phone or mail channels to assess organizational health and client satisfaction, as well as provide program managers with market research and needs assessments intelligence.
- ❑ **Project Management and Delivery of the BC Post-Secondary Student Outcomes Program.** The Student Outcomes Program operated by BC STATS for the Ministry of Advanced Education and the post-secondary institutions provides detailed information on student satisfaction with the education system and the subsequent career and education outcomes. The program supports decision-making and program evaluation by the Ministry of Advanced Education and the colleges and institutes, as well as helps prospective students make informed curriculum choices. The program is key to maintaining a high-quality, relevant post-secondary education system in British Columbia.
- ❑ **Using Technology to Make Information More Accessible.** A key BC STATS goal is to make information more accessible, in particular, to public sector decision-makers. We have moved to exploit new possibilities with rapidly expanding desktop information systems. These include the on-going expansion of our web site to contain more data and information allowing 24/7 access by both government policy analysts and the public.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Addressing current issues successfully requires an understanding of the basic changes taking place in our society and in our economy. While the nature of British Columbia's economy is changing, the ability of governments to respond to these changes is being constrained by fiscal realities. The crux of the current dilemma lies in the combination of new problems facing governments coupled with a reduced fiscal capacity for action.

A major feature of the challenge facing the province is the effect of economic transition on individuals and families within the province. Macro-economic forces are causing changes and dislocations that are having profound effects on our communities and individuals. Labour force adaptation is a major challenge, but it may be overshadowed by the realities of industrial restructuring that could potentially alter the size and distribution of incomes within the province.

The ailments of the provincial economy will not disappear overnight. Hence, the pressure for public sector reform as a strategy to counter government expenditure growth will continue. At the same time, government has a need to develop policies that support economic growth and development within the province. This in turn helps generate growth in government revenues that are necessary to support the growing demands for social program spending.

As has been the case government wide, BC STATS has undergone significant changes to both its operations and budget over the past decade. There is every indication that the next decade will also be a time of change for the Agency. The same factors that are driving public sector reforms across Canada are also driving changes in the way we do our business. This has resulted in a need to:

- ❑ redefine *what* our core functions are,
- ❑ rethink *who* should deliver those functions, and
- ❑ re-examine *how* best to deliver those services given changing technologies.

### OPPORTUNITIES, RISKS AND RISK MITIGATION

The challenges facing government over the next decade are many and varied. Of these challenges, the ones that are likely to have a significant impact on the operations of BC STATS include:

#### *Fiscal Restraint*

In response to tightening fiscal resources there is a tendency on the part of public sector administrators to cut activities that have longer-term or indirect payoffs in favour of activities that have immediate or direct results. This lack of investment in analytic "infrastructure" has had a significant impact on the policy research and analysis functions within many government agencies. The

result is a diminished capacity to provide analytic support to the policy formation process within many ministries.

This situation poses both a difficulty and an opportunity for the Agency. On one hand, fiscal restraint has severely reduced the extent of core funding available to the Agency. This in turn has significantly restricted the ability to identify and fill data and information gaps in the policy formation process. However, this situation has also presented opportunities for the Agency to provide data collection and analytic services on a cost-recoverable basis to those ministries that can no longer afford to do the work in-house.

The challenge that the Agency faces is ensuring that we maintain a client-focused operation while at the same time continuing to seek out new business partners.

### *Information Overload*

Increasingly, government decision-makers are being bombarded with more and more data as information technologies improve and expand. The sheer volume of data available to decision-makers on any particular topic has resulted in a growing need to summarize and present data in such a way that it can be effectively digested.

To address this challenge, a statistical system must have the capacity to create policy-relevant information and present it in a way that can be easily utilized by decision-makers. If a statistical agency is to be relevant to the policy process it must have the capacity to illuminate issues, not just monitor them. The usefulness of statistical information in promoting enlightened public debate is ultimately dependent on the ability to answer the question of why an outcome results.

The challenge the Agency faces as an information provider is ensuring that the will and the capacity exist to effectively convert data into intelligence.

### *Demands for Greater Accountability*

The public is becoming increasingly critical of the public sector and is demanding more accountability from the trustees of the public purse. This has resulted in an increased awareness and application of accountability principles across all government operations. However, in many instances accountability practices at the program level have resulted in performance measures that quantify the program **outputs** as opposed to the **outcomes** of those programs. This tendency results from the fact that outcomes of social, economic and environmental policies are generally the result of complex and multi-faceted events, many of which are outside the control of individual program managers. Despite this difficulty there is still a need to measure and report outcomes of public sector policies and actions at the macro level to help identify needed changes, as well as guide the intervention needed to alter the course of social change.

The availability of a strong and healthy statistical system can have a positive impact on the accountability process, both in terms of the monitoring of program outcomes and in the development of rational policy responses to emerging social, economic and environmental issues.

To play a positive role in this process we must continue to enhance the necessary resources to help ministries develop performance measures, as well as maintain credibility as a provider of information by safeguarding our analytic neutrality.

### *Human Resource Management*

The most important resource of BC STATS is its people. The knowledge, professional integrity, flexibility, and motivation of staff are all key factors to our success in meeting our operational goals.

The challenge that the Agency faces is trying to maintain access to qualified and motivated human resources within a rigid human resource policy structure.

### **STRUCTURAL PRIORITIES**

The long-term development of the Agency will depend on a number of structural priorities:

- ❑ Maintaining a professional infrastructure (e.g. qualified staff, safeguarding the transparency of the statistical process, ensuring that the confidentiality of information pertaining to individuals is respected, etc.)
- ❑ Ensuring that reliable, relevant analysis is provided to users.
- ❑ Encouraging innovation and experimentation, which may require allocating resources from production to research and development – a difficult task in times of tight budgets.
- ❑ Keeping the operational infrastructure in good repair (e.g. data access, storage and communications devices, geographic information systems, etc.)
- ❑ Ensuring a strong capacity exists for client sponsored projects. It is essential that BC STATS programs be “market-driven”, thus ensuring that our products and services are geared to customer needs.
- ❑ Continuing to develop and promote electronic data dissemination. As our client base within government and the general population moves into the electronic age, we must ensure that our ability to provide multi-channel service keeps pace.

### Vision, Mission and Values

#### VISION

*A statistical system that supports sound public policy responses to the changes taking place in our society and in our economy.*

#### MISSION

*To provide timely and reliable statistical information and analysis to the provincial government on the economic, social and demographic conditions of the province and its people.*

#### VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

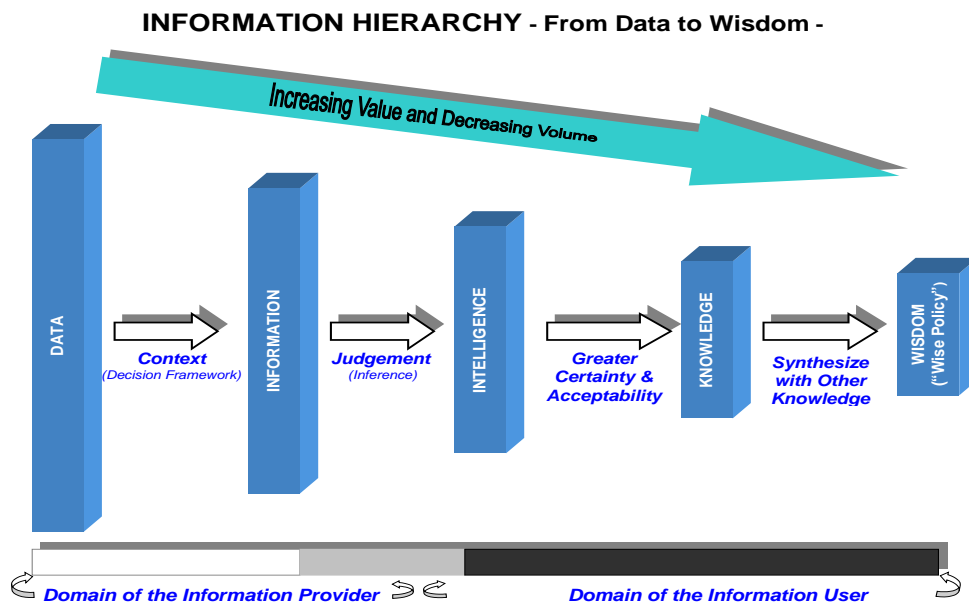
The core values of BC STATS are **professional competence, relevance** and **credibility**. The Agency endeavours to maintain these values with clients by:

- ❑ Ensuring that the confidentiality of information pertaining to individuals is respected.
- ❑ Quick response to client requests, while achieving a balance between timeliness and accuracy.
- ❑ Ensuring that reliable and relevant analyses are provided with limitations stated.
- ❑ Respecting the tenet that providers own their data, and that any caveats providers place on the use of the data must not be violated.
- ❑ Ensuring regular public disclosure of information and methodologies, peer review of methodologies, and political neutrality in all analytic outputs.

## Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Results

GOAL 1: GOVERNMENT POLICY MAKERS HAVE ACCESS TO DATA AND ANALYSIS RELEVANT TO THEIR NEEDS.

To be relevant to the government policy process a statistical system must have the capacity to put data into context to create information.



Source: Modified from V.P. Barabba, "Through a Glass Less Darkly", Presidential Address at the Annual Meeting of the American Statistical Association, Aug. 7, 1990.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Informed decision-making and policy development within government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that statistical information is accompanied with interpretative comments that help tell the story hidden in the data.</li> <li>• Effectively market the services of BC STATS to government, and in particular the executive of government.</li> </ul>

### PERFORMANCE MEASURE:

BC STATS conducts a survey of clients every three to four years to obtain an assessment of program service delivery.

## BC STATS: Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Results

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**TARGET:** Maintain a customer satisfaction level in which 90% or greater of the survey respondents indicate that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the products and services of BC STATS.

<i>Satisfaction with the products and services</i>	1995/96	1999/00	2002/03	2007/08
All Customers	85%	94%	91%	96%
Senior Executive (DM, ADM, CEO)	N/A	92%	94%	94%

**GOAL 2:** CUSTOMERS VIEW BC STATS AS A SOURCE FOR RELIABLE ANALYTIC INFORMATION.

Information is a special commodity as few users can directly validate the data released by statistical offices. As a result, users of data must rely on the reputation of the information provider. Since information that is disbelieved is useless, the intrinsic value of information depends on the credibility of the agency providing the information.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Customers value the information holdings of BC STATS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular public disclosure of information and methodologies.</li> <li>Peer review of methodologies.</li> <li>Political neutrality in analytic outputs.</li> <li>Use of sound scientific standards and practices.</li> </ul>

**PERFORMANCE MEASURE:**

**TARGET:** Maintain a client satisfaction level in which 90% or greater of the survey respondents indicate that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the quality and accuracy of the information they receive from BC STATS.

	1995/96	1999/00	2002/03	2007/08
No concerns with the quality and accuracy of the information provided	94%	90%	98%	97%

## BC STATS: Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Results

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### GOAL 3: COST-EFFICIENCY SERVICE DELIVERY.

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
Government receives the lowest-cost solutions to its statistical information needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a cost-recovery policy to validate demand for certain client specific services.</li> <li>• Tight fiscal controls on expenditures with monthly monitoring.</li> <li>• Identification and monitoring of unit costs of production for statistical services.</li> <li>• Develop and promote multi-channel access and dissemination of statistical information.</li> </ul>

#### PERFORMANCE MEASURE:

Analysis of the costs of the services provided by BC STATS relative to out-sourcing or elimination resulted in a estimated net savings to government of approximately \$5.8 million dollars, represented a net return on investment of 177%<sup>1</sup>. Based on this analysis, closure of the program would have resulted in a reduction in expenditures by the host Ministry of approximately \$1.1 million. However, due to a growing need for program monitoring and performance measures, the demand from within government for services such as regional population estimates, survey support, quarterly economic accounts, program performance measurement, or information on regional socio-economic conditions would continue. This continued need by ministries for products and services provided by the Agency was estimated to result in a higher delivery cost to government overall totalling \$6.9 million annually.

**TARGET:** Maintain a return on expenditure greater than 100 per cent.

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
<b>Return on Expenditure</b>	142%	160%	155%	166%	165%	177%
<b>Net Savings (millions)</b>	\$1.2	\$2.0	\$2.5	\$2.9	\$3.4	\$5.8

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<sup>1</sup> See: *BC STATS Business Case Analysis*, December 8, 2000 for an explanation of the methodology used.

## BC STATS: Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Results

### GOAL 4: ENGAGED WORKFORCE.

The most important resource of BC STATS is its people. The knowledge, professional integrity, flexibility, and motivation of staff are all key factors to successfully meeting our operational goals.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
High performing, motivated and engaged workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting a work site responsive to staff needs.</li> <li>Supporting the delegation of responsibility and authority.</li> <li>Promoting an environment where innovation and creativity are supported.</li> <li>Ensuring that our employee profile reflects the diversity in the population we serve.</li> </ul>

### PERFORMANCE MEASURE:

**TARGET:** Based on the results of the annual government wide Work Environment Survey, achieve an overall level of engagement among BC STATS staff in the “green band” (65 points or higher).

	Feb 2006	April 2007	April 2008	April 2009
<b>BC STATS: Employee Engagement</b>	61	65	67	68
Job Satisfaction	65	71	69	72
Organizational Satisfaction	61	65	64	63
<i>Work Unit Satisfaction</i>	N/A	N/A	78	79
BC Public Service Commitment	57	59	67	69

*(for comparative purposes only)*

	Feb 2006	April 2007	April 2008	April 2009
<b>BC Government: Employee Engagement</b>	58	63	66	68
Job Satisfaction	62	66	67	69
Organizational Satisfaction	53	59	62	64
<i>Work Unit Satisfaction</i>	N/A	N/A	69	71
BC Public Service Commitment	60	64	67	70

- Address your challenges (54 points or lower)
- Focus on improvements (55 to 64 points)
- Leverage your strengths (65 to 74 points)
- Celebrate your successes (75 to 84 points)
- Model your achievements (85 points and higher)

# Appendix

### BC STATS Connection to the Government Strategic Plan

The strategic plan sets out an overarching vision, goals and priority actions for the Province and acts as a guide for ministries and Crown agencies when determining priorities and the allocation of resources.

The government has identified five strategic goals to be achieved over the 2007/08 to 2015/16 period. These goals are to:

- Make B.C. the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent
- Lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness
- Build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, special needs, children at risk and seniors
- Lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and, water quality and the best fisheries management
- Create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada

The activities of BC STATS support these goals largely through the development of performance measures and indicators. The Agency has a proven track record in delivering high quality statistical information, surveys and analysis to ministries and other organizations that contribute to program decisions and to effective performance measurement, which is the cornerstone to meeting the targets set out in ministries' service plans.

In addition, BC STATS works closely with the Premier's Office and the British Columbia Progress Board reviewing data and analytic requirements to support the establishment and monitoring of performance benchmarks for the province and its regions. In turn, many of these indicators form the key measures used to assess the objectives of the five primary goals of the Strategic Plan.

### BC STATS Connection to Statistics Canada

Within Canada the federal government is responsible for the bulk of the statistical activities. This came about as a result of the division of functions under the British North America Act of 1867, which allocated “the Census and statistics” to the national government. Although this was interpreted as a non-exclusive allocation of functions, statistics were considered a matter of national concern that should come under the general co-ordination of the federal government.

The allocation of the majority of statistical activity to the statistical office of the federal government makes a good deal of sense given the need for comparable data, inter-regionally and internationally. The result has been the development of a narrow role for provincial statistical agencies relative to that of Statistics Canada. Despite this relatively narrow role, provincial statistical agencies are an important part of the national statistical system.

BC STATS represents the Government of British Columbia in the National Statistical System, which is comprised of Statistics Canada and the statistical agencies of the provinces and territories. The purpose of the National Statistical System is to co-ordinate statistical activities in Canada and to ensure that the programs of member agencies are complementary rather than duplicative.

The National Statistical System also serves as a mechanism for the sharing of data between member agencies. However, for data sharing to occur a number of legislative and administrative safeguards must be in place. Statistics Canada requires that provincial legislation be enacted that is compatible with the Federal Statistics Act, and that the province maintains the capacity to effectively administer that legislation. These requirements were highlighted in a 1994 review conducted by Statistics Canada of data sharing agreements with provincial statistical agencies. That review examined; *“the overall setting and modus operandi of provincial offices to determine whether they were operating independently (i.e. at arm’s length) from the program units of departments to which they report, and whether they were supplied with separate, secure accommodations and computer facilities that allowed them to protect the confidentiality of the sensitive data they have contracted for with Statistics Canada.”*

BC STATS both contributes to and benefits from the existence of the National Statistical System. The various federal-provincial data sharing arrangements that are currently in place along with the knowledge transfer between the member agencies have resulted in significantly reduced data collection costs to the Provincial Government, and reduced burden on the part of survey respondents.

## Statistics Act

BC STATS operates under the auspices of the *Statistics Act* (R.S. Chap 439 1996), which among other things:

- ❑ Sets out the mandate of the agency, including an explicit responsibility to coordinate statistical activities within the Government of British Columbia and between the Government and statistical agencies of other governments.
- ❑ Requires respondents to reply to agency surveys and requests for information.
- ❑ Protects confidentiality of individual information. Agency staff are required to take an oath of secrecy, and are subject to substantial penalties if they violate confidentiality.
- ❑ Permits data sharing arrangements with other jurisdictions.

A copy of the *Statistics Act* follows.

**STATISTICS ACT**  
**[RSBC 1996] CHAPTER 439**

### Section 1 — Interpretation

1. In this Act

- "director" means the director of statistics appointed under section 2;
- "ministry" means a ministry, department, board, commission or agency of the Province;
- "respondent" means a person or a ministry in respect of whom or in respect of whose activities a report or information is sought or provided under this Act;
- "return" means the record of a report or information provided by a respondent;
- "Statistics Canada" means the statistics bureau referred to in the *Statistics Act* (Canada).

### Section 2 — Director and staff

2. (1) A person must be appointed under the *Public Service Act* to be the director of statistics for the purposes of this Act and to carry out the duties of the director under this Act.
- (2) Other employees required for the proper administration of this Act may be appointed under the *Public Service Act*.

### Section 3 — Temporary staff

- 3 (1) Despite the *Public Service Act*, the minister may employ or engage persons on a temporary basis to assist with a project, program or other matter undertaken under this Act, and those persons are deemed, for the purposes of this Act, to be employed under this Act.
- (2) An employee of a ministry, other than the one under the administration of the minister, who is engaged in a project, program or other matter to which this Act applies is deemed to be employed under this Act while so engaged.

### Section 4 — Oath of secrecy

4. The director and every person employed for the purposes of this Act or employed or engaged in a project, program or other matter to which this Act applies must, before commencing their duties, take an oath or affirm in the following form:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully and honestly fulfil my duties as an employee in conformity with the *Statistics Act*, and all rules and instructions made under it, and that I will not, without proper authority, disclose or make known any matter or thing that comes to my knowledge by reason of my employment.

### Section 5 — Powers of director

5. (1) Subject to the minister's approval, the director may develop statistics and in particular may
- (a) collect, compile, compare, analyze, abstract, project and distribute statistical information respecting the commercial, industrial, financial, social, economic and general activities and conditions of British Columbia and persons in British Columbia or doing business in British Columbia;
  - (b) collaborate with or assist ministries in the collection, compilation, analysis and distribution of statistical information, including statistics derived from the activities of those ministries; and
  - (c) coordinate statistical activities between the government and statistical agencies of other governments.
- (2) In addition to the powers conferred under subsection (1), the minister may authorize the director to collect, compile, compare, analyze, abstract, project and distribute other statistics or statistical information the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers desirable.

### Section 6 — Discrimination prohibited

6. (1) The minister, the director and other persons employed for the purposes of this Act shall not use the powers conferred by, or information collected under, this Act to the prejudice of any person.
- (2) Despite anything in this Act, the director may authorize the use of sampling methods for the collection of statistics.

### Section 7 — Access to records

7. A person having custody or charge of records must make them available to the director or a person authorized by the director, if those records
- (a) are maintained by a ministry, municipality, regional district, corporation, business or organization, from which information respecting the objects of this Act can be obtained; or
  - (b) would aid in the completion or correction of information obtained from a body referred to in paragraph (a).

### Section 8 — Evidence of appointment

8. A document purporting to be signed by the minister or the director referring to the appointment or removal of an employee, or setting out instructions to an employee, is,

without proof of the signature or of the official character of the person purporting to have signed it, proof of the appointment, removal or instructions.

**Section 9 — Secrecy**

9. (1) Except as otherwise permitted by this section and except for the purposes of a prosecution under this Act,
- (a) a person who is not employed or engaged under this Act and sworn under section 4 must not be permitted to examine an identifiable individual return; and
  - (b) a person sworn under section 4 must not disclose or knowingly cause to be disclosed, by any means, information obtained under this Act in a manner that it is possible from the disclosure to relate the particulars obtained from an individual return to an identifiable individual person, business or organization.
- (2) Subsection (1) applies despite any provision of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* other than section 44 (1) (b), (2), (2.1) and (3) of that Act.
- (3) Subsection (2) does not apply to personal information, as defined in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, that has been in existence for 100 or more years or to other information that has been in existence for 50 or more years.
- (4) Subject to subsection (1), the director or other person employed for the purposes of this Act must not use the powers under this Act to restrict the free communication of information to ministries and persons who are legally entitled to the information.
- (5) The minister may authorize the release
- (a) to Statistics Canada, under an agreement under section 11, of the particulars of information obtained in the course of administering this Act, or
  - (b) to a ministry, municipality, regional district, corporation, business, organization or Canada or a province that was party to an agreement under section 12, of the particulars of information collected under the agreement.
- (6) The director may authorize the disclosure of one or more of the following kinds of information:
- (a) collected by persons, organizations or ministries for their own purposes and communicated to the director;
  - (b) respecting a person or organization if disclosure is consented to in writing by the person or organization affected;
  - (c) respecting a business if disclosure is consented to in writing by the owner of the business or, if it is a corporation, by a person authorized by the corporation to consent;
  - (d) available to the public under an enactment;
  - (e) in the form of an index or list of
    - (i) names and locations of individual establishments, firms or businesses,
    - (ii) products produced, manufactured, processed, transported, stored, purchased or sold, or the services provided, by individual establishments, firms or businesses in the course of their business, and
    - (iii) names and addresses of individual establishments, firms or businesses that are within specific ranges of numbers of employees or persons engaged in or constituting the work force.

- (7) If the information referred to in subsection (6) (a) is communicated to the director, it is subject to the same secrecy requirements to which it was subject when collected and the director may only disclose that information in the manner and to the extent agreed by the collector of the information and the director.
- (8) The contravention of subsection (1) by a member of the public service constitutes reasonable cause for dismissal.

**Section 10 — Protection of returns**

- 10. (1) Except for the purposes of a prosecution under this Act,
  - (a) a return made under this Act and a copy of the return in the possession of the respondent is privileged and may not be used as evidence in any proceedings, and
  - (b) a person sworn under section 4 may not by an order of a court, tribunal or other body be required in any proceedings to give testimony or to produce a return or record about information obtained in carrying out this Act.
- (2) This section applies to information the director is prohibited by this Act from disclosing, or that may only be disclosed under an authorization under section 9 (5), (6), or (7).

**Section 11 — Agreements with Statistics Canada**

- 11. (1) The minister may enter an agreement with Statistics Canada for the exchange with or transmission to Statistics Canada of one or more of the following:
  - (a) replies to specific statistical inquiries;
  - (b) replies to specific classes of information collected under this Act;
  - (c) tabulations or analyses based on replies referred to in paragraph (a) or (b).
- (2) Except for information described in section 9 (6) or (7), an agreement entered under this section does not apply to a reply made to, or information collected by, the director before the date the agreement was entered or is to have effect, whichever is the later date.
- (3) If the minister collects information in respect of which an agreement under this section applies, the minister must first advise the respondent of the agreement with Statistics Canada and that the information secured from the respondent may be communicated under that agreement.

**Section 12 — Other agreements**

- 12. (1) The minister may enter an agreement with a ministry, municipality, regional district, corporation, business, organization or Canada or a province for the exchange of information collected jointly and for subsequent tabulation or publication based on that information.
- (2) An agreement under subsection (1) must provide that
  - (a) a notice is to be sent to the respondent stating that the information is being collected jointly on behalf of the director and the ministry, municipality, regional district, corporation, business, organization or Canada or a province, as the case may be; and
  - (b) the agreement does not apply to information obtained from a respondent who gives notice in writing to the director that he objects to sharing information between the director and a body referred to in paragraph (a).

- (3) An exchange of information pursuant to an agreement under this section may, subject to subsection (2), include replies to original inquiries and supplementary information provided by a respondent to the director or the other party jointly collecting the information.

**Section 13 — Offences by those who take oath of security**

13. (1) A person who, after taking an oath or making an affirmation set out in section 4, does any of the following commits an offence:
- (a) makes a false declaration, statement or return in the performance of his or her duties;
  - (b) in the pretended performance of his or her duties, obtains or seeks to obtain information he or she is not authorized to obtain;
  - (c) contravenes section 9 (1) (b);
  - (d) discloses, directly or indirectly, to a person not entitled to receive it, information obtained by him in the course of his employment that might exert an influence on or affect the market value of a security, product, article or commodity;
  - e) uses information referred to in paragraph (d) to speculate in securities, products, articles or commodities.
- (2) A person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is liable to a penalty of not more than \$5,000.

**Section 14 — Offence: respondents**

14. (1) A person who, without lawful excuse, does any of the following commits an offence:
- (a) refuses or neglects to answer, or answers falsely, a question required to obtain information for the purposes of this Act that is asked by a person employed under this Act;
  - (b) refuses or neglects to provide information or to fill in to the best of the person's knowledge and belief a schedule or form that the director requests the person to fill in, and to return it when requested, or gives false or misleading information or practises any other deception.
- (2) A person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is liable to a penalty of not more than \$500.

**Section 15 — Offence of obtaining access to records**

15. (1) A person commits an offence who,
- (a) having custody or charge of records maintained in a ministry, municipality, regional district, corporation, business or organization, from which information can be obtained or that would aid in the completion or correction of the information, refuses or neglects to grant access to the records to a person authorized for the purpose by the director; or
  - (b) otherwise in any way obstructs a person employed in the execution of a duty under this Act.
- (2) A person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is liable to a penalty of not more than \$1,000.

### Section 16 — Offence of misrepresentation

16. (1) A person who falsely represents himself or herself to be making an inquiry under the authority of this Act or under the authority of the minister or the director commits an offence.
- (2) A person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is liable to a penalty of not more than \$5,000.

### Section 17 — Power to make regulations

17. (1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations referred to in section 41 of the *Interpretation Act*.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations as follows:
- (a) establish appropriate technical standards for surveys, administrative records and other statistical activities of all ministries; and
  - (b) establish procedures to avoid duplication in the information collected by different ministries.

### Compendium Guide to the Statistics Act

The *Statistics Act* is a valuable instrument for providing government with the high quality statistical data that is required for the purposes of planning, research, policy analysis and program management. The provisions of the Act cover a number of specific objectives:

- ❑ Provide the legal authority to collect the data required.
- ❑ Protect the privacy and security of individual responses.
- ❑ Co-ordinate statistical matters within the government to provide as much high quality statistical data as possible while reducing duplication.
- ❑ Allow for access to that confidential data held by Statistics Canada that is presently not available to the province.

This section examines each section of the legislation to summarize the content and explain the rationale in relationship to the objectives indicated above.

#### SPECIAL NOTE ON “SECTION 11” AGREEMENTS UNDER THE CANADA STATISTICS ACT

The *Canada Statistics Act* allows for the transmission or exchange of data based on individual responses (i.e. micro-data) between Statistics Canada and provincial statistical agencies, subject to certain requirements specified under Section 11 of the Federal *Statistics Act*. Confidential information can be exchanged under Section 11 without the prior approval of those individuals or corporations providing the data.

The requirements of a provincial agency for eligibility for “Section 11” agreements are as follows:

- ❑ the provincial agency must have statutory authority to collect the information in question;
- ❑ provincial legislation must provide statutory penalties for respondents who refuse or neglect to provide information or who falsify information;
- ❑ the provincial agency must be prohibited by law from disclosing information that Statistics Canada is legally prohibited from disclosing;
- ❑ the officers and employees of the provincial agency must be subject to statutory penalties for improper disclosure of information that are substantially the same as those for Statistics Canada employees.

The basic point is that Statistics Canada will transmit data to provincial statistical agencies without prior approval of the respondents if the provinces have legislation that is generally compatible to the Federal *Statistics Act*. The rationale is that the confidentiality of the respondent’s data is protected equally as well under provincial legislation as under federal.

A number of the provisions of the B.C. *Statistics Act*, therefore, are designed to meet several objectives, including making B.C. legislation compatible with the federal Act for the purposes of Section “11” agreements.

### SECTIONS CONTAINED IN THE STATISTICS ACT

#### *Section 1: Interpretations*

Definitions of various terms used in the *Act* are provided. They are required for interpretation of the *Act*.

It is government policy that the Minister responsible for the administration of a specific *Act* be named by an Order-in-Council rather than be specifically designated within the legislation itself.

#### *Section 2: Director and Staff*

2(1) An officer is appointed under the *Public Service Act* as the director of statistics and to carry out the duties of the director. Besides for the obvious administrative aspects of the section, it is necessary to specify the director for the purposes of “Section 11” agreements with Statistics Canada.

2(2) Provision is also made for the appointment of other staff.

#### *Section 3: Temporary Staff*

In addition to permanent employees referred to in Section 2, the agency can employ people on a temporary basis, or from other ministries. In all cases, such employees are covered by the other provisions of the *Act* (e.g. secrecy, confidentiality).

In all cases it is made very clear that employees retained under this section are under the authority of this *Act* and subject to its provisions and penalties. Thus, additional resources and expertise may be obtained by the agency for specific projects while still protecting the confidentiality of the information.

#### *Section 4: Oath of Secrecy*

All employees of the agency or people working on projects under the auspices of the Act must take the prescribed oath of secrecy. Basically, the oath indicates that employees will obey the provisions of the *Act*.

Employees are required to take an oath to protect the confidentiality of data provided by respondents. In subsequent sections of this *Act*, penalties are prescribed for breaking the oath of secrecy and these sections are also required for “Section 11” agreements with Statistics Canada as well as to convince respondents that their information is secure with the statistics agency.

*Section 5: Powers of the Director*

This is a very important section as it outlines the duties that the statistical agency will undertake.

The Minister may authorize the director to gather, work with and disseminate statistics; to co-operate with other ministries to gather, work with and disseminate their statistics; and to co-ordinate statistical activities between the government and other statistical agencies. In addition, the Minister may authorize the director to undertake other statistical activities as directed by Cabinet.

5(1)(a) Indicates the statistical functions which may be undertaken:

Collect: gathering of information.

Compile: processing of collected data.

Compare: contrasting of B.C. information to that of other jurisdictions both in Canada and externally is important because of the amount of economic activity in B.C. related to trade.

Analyze: examination of data and application of various mathematical and analytical techniques.

Abstract: summarization of information.

Project: utilization of data to project future trends.

Distribute: dissemination of non-confidential data through a variety of media (e.g. machine-readable, hard copy).

The rest of Subsection 5(1)(a) indicates the various subject areas that may be covered and clearly points out that such information should relate to all persons who reside in the province or do business here (regardless of residency).

5(1)(b) Under Subsection 5(1)(b) the agency is given the power to assist other ministries with their statistical activities including their administration records (i.e. information collected through or for the purpose of carrying out program responsibilities). There is no intention to interfere with the activities of other ministries but the agency will be able to offer assistance and technical advice to the ministries in order to produce the widest variety of useful statistical information at a minimum cost. The provisions under Section 17 will relate to this section.

5(1)(c) The co-ordination of statistical matters with Statistics Canada and other organizations under Subsection 5(1)(c) is important to reduce duplication of efforts by ministries, to co-ordinate B.C. activities within a national system of statistics and to present a strong, unified provincial voice in statistical matters. Such co-ordination will relate to matters of statistical policy and program development and is not intended to interfere with working relationships between ministries and organizations such as Statistics Canada.

5(2) In the role of the central statistical agency within the government, the agency should not only maintain a regular program of statistical activities but also undertake such special studies as directed under Subsection 5(2) in response to unusual or unanticipated circumstances arising.

### ***Section 6: Discrimination Prohibited***

Under Subsection 6(1), the minister and all employees of the agency are forbidden to discriminate against individuals and companies in performing their duties under the Act. However, under Subsection 6(2) sampling methods may be used.

6(1) Included to protect individuals and companies from whom information is collected from being treated in a punitive fashion.

6(2) Provides for the use of sampling techniques for the collection of information but this is not discriminatory towards individuals or corporations. For many types of data, sample surveys are the best way to obtain high quality data at a low cost and a scientifically drawn sample will not be prejudiced against specific respondents.

### ***Section 7: Access to Public Records***

This section allows the agency access to public records of governments, companies or organizations. It provides it with the power to collect required information and is needed for the purpose of "Section 11" agreements with Statistics Canada as well as for undertaking the duties of the agency as specified under Section 5. Since the Director, under Section 7, has a statutory authorization to access records held by other bodies, the disclosure requirements of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (Section 33 d), and the *Personal Information Protection Act* (Section 18 o) are satisfied.

Although Section 7 gives access powers to the Director, it is a statutory rule of construction that wherever the Legislature has, in an earlier statute, made unambiguous provisions with respect to access, then general access provisions contained in later legislation do not apply.

### ***Section 8: Evidence of Appointment***

Any document signed by the minister or director is evidence in itself of appointments, instructions, etc.

This section is required for the administration of the Act and will be used, if necessary, in prosecutions under the Act. It means, for example, that it would not be necessary for the minister or the director to have their signature notarized on official documents.

### ***Section 9: Secrecy***

This section outlines the secrecy provisions of the Act. Only persons employed and sworn under the Act may examine an individual return and they may not

disclose information in any way that will identify an individual return. The only exceptions are for the purposes of a prosecution and the following:

- ❑ release of information under an agreement with Statistics Canada (see Section 11);
- ❑ release of information under an agreement with ministries, municipalities, organizations, etc. (see Section 12);
- ❑ information collected by a third party and given to the agency (under certain conditions);
- ❑ information on a person, organization or business where permission is given in writing;
- ❑ information legally available to the public;
- ❑ lists of companies showing name and address by products produced and range of employee size;
- ❑ examination by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Commissioner.

This is an extremely important section of the Act as it guarantees the privacy of individual responses by forbidding the release of individual data except under a few carefully controlled circumstances and is required for “Section 11” agreements under the federal *Statistics Act*.

9(1)(a) Individual returns are protected by ensuring that those who examine individual responses are employed under the Act and have taken the oath prescribed in Section 4 and are thus subject to the penalties outlined in Section 13.

9(1)(b) Persons who are permitted to examine individual returns are then forbidden to release or disclose any information so that the individual respondent can be identified. This protection of individual data extends to areas such as guarding against residual disclosures (e.g. a residual disclosure would occur if data on 9 firms out of 10 were to be published along with a total for all 10 firms. By subtracting the 9 firms’ data from the total for all 10, the information on the 10th firm could be obtained).

9(2)(3) These subsections were added in 1995 to ensure that the security provisions of Section 9(1) cannot be overwritten by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

9(4) Subsection 9(4) makes it very clear that the Act is designed to protect individual responses but not to hide or obstruct the legitimate flow of information to other ministries or the public, i.e. the director and other employees are not prevented from providing information that could be lawfully obtained elsewhere such as data published by another agency.

9(5)(a) The minister may release data to Statistics Canada (see Section 11) or other parties (see Section 12) under joint agreements entered into under this Act.

9(5)(b) The minister must authorize such agreements since they represent matters of government policy and form a very important part of the Act.

9(6) The director may release data in the following cases:

9(6)(a) information collected by an outside party that is given to the agency.

9(6)(b)(c) information on a person, an organization, or a business if the person, organization or owner of the business consents in writing. People or groups may want such information released for their own benefit from time to time but a written statement to that effect would be necessary to allow the agency to waive the secrecy requirements.

9(6)(d) information already available under an agreement may be released to the public. This clause is included to protect the rights already enjoyed by the public to obtain certain types of information while also avoiding potentially embarrassing situations for the agency.

9(6)(e) the names and locations of individual firms as well as their products and employment size range may also be released under the *Canada Statistics Act*. Such information is generally public and does not reveal anything confidential about the operations of the firms. The publication of such information is of benefit to the companies in terms of trade directories, etc. Of course, this information cannot be produced in such a manner that other information can be discerned on individual companies.

9(7) In the case of information collected by an outside party that is given to the agency, in fairness to the respondents and the original collectors of the data, the agency is bound by the secrecy provisions under which the information was originally collected and can only release the data as agreed upon by the collector.

9(8) Subsection 9(8) is an additional safeguard as public servants who contravene Subsection 9(1) are liable for dismissal.

### ***Section 10: Protection of Returns***

10(1) Subsection 11(1) gives protection to respondents by guaranteeing that replies they provide to statistical surveys cannot be demanded by a court or tribunal, except for prosecutions under this Act. Once a return is completed it becomes confidential and courts, etc. cannot demand it of the respondent or the agency. This guarantee also encourages respondents to provide accurate information which they might otherwise be reluctant to divulge.

10(2) Subsection 10(2) provides that only confidential information is protected by Subsection 10(1) above.

### *Section 11: Agreements with Statistics Canada*

This section is similar to Section 11 of the Canada *Statistics Act* and serves the same purposes. Replies to individual responses can be exchanged under agreement to increase the usefulness of the information. Such agreements cannot include information previously collected before the agreement and respondents must be informed that the information they provide is to be shared with Statistics Canada.

11(1) Such exchange agreements with Statistics Canada help increase the amount of data available through the national statistical system while at the same time reducing duplication and expenditure of resources. The sharing of data allows the information needs of both the federal government and the B.C. government to be met without duplicating efforts. This in turn controls and reduces the number of survey forms that businesses and individuals are asked to complete.

11(2) Data collected previous to the signing of an agreement may not be exchanged as this would break faith with respondents who provided the data under the promise that it would be seen in an identifiable manner only within the B.C. agency.

11(3) In order to demonstrate good faith with respondents, this subsection states that respondents must be clearly informed that replies are to be exchanged with Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada is subject to the same stringent secrecy provisions under the Canada *Statistics Act* as the B.C. agency is under this Act, so that the respondents' confidentiality will be protected when their information is shared.

### *Section 12: Other Agreements*

The minister may enter into an agreement to share information (original and supplementary replies as well as analysis) with other parties such as ministries, federal departments, municipal governments, organizations, companies, etc. The respondent must be informed that the data to be collected will be shared with the other party. However, if the respondent states in writing that they object to giving their information to the other party, that respondent's data will not be exchanged.

Section 23 of the *Interpretation Act* allows the deputy minister to exercise the powers of the minister on the Minister's behalf, and as such may enter into information sharing agreements under Section 12.

12(1) As under Section 11, this section is designed to provide the greatest amount of information possible, with a minimum of duplication of effort and burden on the respondent. The major difference from Section 11 is that Statistics Canada has strict legal safeguards for the security of individual responses while the parties with whom agreements can be made under this section do not.

12(2)(a) To protect the confidentiality of the respondent's replies, the respondent must be advised his response will be shared with the other party.

12(2)(b) The respondent is not forced to provide data to another party without legal safeguards to protect confidentiality, hence information will not be exchanged if the respondent objects in writing. In practice, a notification similar to the following would be included on the questionnaire: "Agreements exist under Section 12 of the Statistics Act to share this information with (name of organizations). Under Section 12, you may refuse to share your information with any of these organizations by writing to the Director of Statistics and returning your letter of objection along with your completed questionnaire."

12(3) Specifies the type of information (replies to original enquiries and supplementary information provided by a respondent) covered by this section.

### ***Section 13: Offences***

This section helps protect the confidentiality of respondents' information as well as ensuring the highest standard of conduct on the part of the staff of the agency. It is also required for data sharing agreements with statistics Canada. A heavy penalty (\$5,000 maximum) can be imposed on employees who contravene any of the restrictions outlined in this section as follows:

13(1)(a) making false statements, declarations, etc.;

13(1)(b) trying to obtain information which they are not authorized to collect;

13(1)(c) contravening the secrecy provisions under Section 9(1)(b), i.e. disclosing confidential information;

13(1)(d) disclosing confidential information to unauthorized individuals that might influence the prices of stocks, commodities, etc.;

13(1)(e) using confidential information to speculate in the stock market, commodity market, etc. This clause is not designed to prevent employees of the agency from investing in the stock market (a right enjoyed by other public servants) but is designed to prohibit the use of confidential data for such purposes.

### ***Section 14: Offence - Respondents***

The compulsory nature of collection under the Act is required to ensure the high quality of the information. Surveys of a voluntary nature would not produce data of a high enough quality and reliability for the purposes of government planning and program development. In return for being required to provide the data under penalty, the respondent is guaranteed confidentiality of his individual information. Also, this section is required for data sharing agreements with Statistics Canada under Section 11 of the *Canada Statistics Act*.

It should be noted that the penalty for respondents is only one-tenth of that for employees who do not honour the confidentiality of the respondents' information.

14(1)(2) Respondents are subject to a fine of up to \$500 if they refuse to provide data requested under the authority of this Act, refuse to submit a return or provide false information.

An important interpretation of this section is the distinction between information *requiring* for the purposes of the Act, and information *requested* by the Director under the Act. The Director may request that the answer be provided without "requiring" it. Hence, the Agency may undertake voluntary surveys where response rates may be less than 100 per cent without penalties to non-respondents.

### ***Section 15: Offence - Access and Records***

This section is similar in intent to Section 14 and is also required for "Section 11" agreements under the *Canada Statistics Act*.

15(1)(2) Respondents in charge of public or corporate records etc. who refuse access to the records or otherwise obstruct and employee engaged in a task under the authority of this Act, are liable to a fine of up to \$1,000.

### ***Section 16: Offence - Misrepresentation***

Persons who falsely attempt to collect information by claiming to be operating under the authority of this Act are liable to a fine of up to \$5,000. Such occurrences undermine the trust in and respect for a statistical agency as well as leading to abuse of information provided by respondents in good faith. It must be made clear that any individual or company that attempts to cheat and mislead respondents in such a manner are subject to high penalties.

### ***Section 17: Regulations***

The Cabinet may set out regulations to establish appropriate technical standards for all statistical activities of the various ministries (including surveys and administrative records), and to avoid duplication of information collected by the ministries.

This is an important section of the Act in terms of providing high quality data and efficient use of resources. Since the regulations governing such matters would apply to all ministries within the government, it is appropriate that such regulations be established by Cabinet. It is expected that the statistical agency will be responsible for implementing and administering the regulations set out by Cabinet.

7(2)(a) The establishing of technical standards will cover two main areas:

- ❑ the setting out of standards for statistical methodology to ensure that information gathered is of the highest quality;
- ❑ the development of common classification systems for statistical projects to ensure the quality and comparability of the data.

Regulations to establish appropriate standards will cover administrative records as well as statistical surveys. Administrative records, which are compiled from the program activities of the ministries, can be used to provide useful social and economic data for the province and regions within the province. The intention is not to interfere in the program activities of individual ministries, but rather to ensure that administrative records systems (particularly those just starting up) are designed to produce useful social and economic information on the province and regions of the province as a by-product, at low cost.

17(2)(b) Procedures to avoid duplication of statistical activities among ministries are important in two ways:

- to prevent the misuse of resources and promote efficiency in government operations;
- to minimize the demands on respondents who are asked to provide information in one form or another.

It should be noted that the federal government has produced a Treasury Board directive dealing with the co-ordination of statistical activities and setting of standards. Statistics Canada has responsibility for administering the directive within the federal government.

### History of BC STATS

The formal establishment of a central statistical organization within the provincial government took place under the *Legislative Library and Bureau of Statistics Act*, 1894. It is interesting to note that the current activities of BC STATS closely parallel the mandate specified in the original act for : "...collecting, compiling, tabulating and publishing information for public purposes".

The Act provided that the Secretary of the Bureau of Statistics would be the Legislative Librarian, unless Cabinet appointed a separate Secretary. In the absence of such an appointment, R.E. Gosnell was appointed as both Secretary of the Bureau of Statistics and Legislative Librarian.

The most significant early development in the field of provincial statistics was the publication in 1897 of the 500-page *Year Book of British Columbia and Manual of Provincial Information*, produced by British Columbia's first statistician, R. Edward Gosnell. His comprehensive handbook provided a wealth of information on the province in the waning years of the nineteenth century, and stood as a model for future compendia.

Shortly after the turn of the century, the government's statistical activities became centred in the Bureau of Provincial Information, headed by Gosnell. The Bureau produced a variety of reports and bulletins over the first three decades, including reports on the province's primary resource industries - forestry, fishing, mining and agriculture - as well as additional yearbooks published on an irregular basis.

In 1934, an advisory body, the Economic Council, was created under the *Economic Council Act*. It consisted of ten members, including a chairman, reporting to the Minister of Labour. The Council, through its research department, compiled and published information and statistics relating to all sectors of the provincial economy.

A few years later, in 1937, the *Economic Council Act* was repealed and the Council's research department was incorporated in the Bureau of Economics and Statistics within the newly created Department of Trade and Industry. The mandate of the Bureau, as specified in the *Department of Trade and Industry Act*, included the collection, compilation and publication of statistics under its own authority, in conjunction with other provincial departments (ministries) and also with the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (Statistics Canada), and to provide a co-ordinated and integrated system of provincial statistics.

Statistical activities waned during World War II, then accelerated in the early post-war period, which was characterized by strong population growth, an increasing standard of living, rapid development of the provincial infrastructure and expanding capital investment in most sectors of the economy.

In 1957, the Department of Industrial Development, Trade, and Commerce was created by an Act of the same name, which repealed the *Department of Trade and Industry Act*. The operations of the Bureau of Economics and Statistics were not affected, as the basic provisions covering duties and responsibilities were not changed. However, the new Act did not specify that statistical activities were to be performed by a "Bureau" but rather were the purview of the "Department". During the 1960s several name changes took place from the Bureau of Economics and Statistics to the Economic and Statistics Branch, then back to 'Bureau' and finally back to 'Branch'.

The passage of Bill 71 in 1974 repealed the *Department of Industrial Development, Trade, and Commerce Act* and replaced it with the *Department of Economic Development Act*, changing and broadening the mandate of the department, but making no specific mention of the responsibilities for a statistical function. In 1974 a study carried out by the B.C. Research Council recommended a substantial reorganization of the Department of Economic Development, including the restoration of the former specialized capabilities in particular economic fields. An organization chart dated November 1974 showed that statistical functions would be carried out by one of four divisions forming the Research and Analysis Branch. The Division was to be comprised of three sections devoted to economic and business statistics, census and social statistics, and statistical technology.

The *Statistics Act* of 1977 marked a watershed in the evolution of government statistical activities. It set out a mandate for the usual duties associated with a statistical agency, including explicit powers to collect information using surveys and other vehicles, protect the confidentiality of individual information, coordinate statistical activities within the provincial government, and enter into data sharing agreements with Statistics Canada and other agencies. Shortly thereafter, in 1978, the Central Statistics Bureau was created under the auspices of the *Statistics Act* by administrative order.

Since 1977, the *Statistics Act* has continued to provide the statutory underpinning for the statistical services provided by BC STATS, although the agency has undergone several name changes and has been located in a number of different government ministries. The current name, BC STATS, was adopted in 1993 to provide organizational stability both for our customers and for ourselves as the

## BC STATS: History of BC STATS

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agency moved from ministry to ministry. Most recently, in May 2001, BC STATS was transferred from the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations to the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services where it currently resides.