

**BUDGET SUBMISSION**  
*Fiscal Years 2011/12 – 2013/14*

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**Presented  
to  
The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services  
Legislative Assembly of British Columbia**

**Nov. 24, 2010**



**ombudsperson**  
B.C.'s Independent Voice For Fairness

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## Overview

This budget submission sets out the resource requirements for the Office of the Ombudsperson for fiscal year 2011/12 (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012). It includes a proposed planning budget for fiscal years 2012/13 and 2013/14 and is accompanied by a Service Plan for fiscal years 2011/12 – 2013/14.

This year's submission has been prepared after careful analysis of the resources required to continue to deliver core services in a situation of fiscal constraint while managing the risk associated with a File Awaiting Assignment Process and resource limits to systemic investigations.

The submission delineates between those resources devoted to the Ombudsperson's mandate and those related to the Office's continuing role in providing Shared Service support to four offices of the legislature.

The Office of the Ombudsperson operating budget requirement for Fiscal year 2011/12 is \$5,372,000 and for planning purposes, an operating budget of \$5,311,000 in each of fiscal years 2012/13 and 2013/14. The net increase in operating funds is \$427,000.

The request includes \$203,000 for building occupancy and \$83,000 for amortization. These costs are a result of the relocation of the Office of the Ombudsperson to shared accommodation under a 15-year lease agreement, as recommended by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in the fall of 2008. Construction of the space was completed on time and within the Fiscal 2010/11 budget approved by the Committee. Fiscal 2011/12 is the first full year in the building.

The request also includes \$106,000 for funding to maintain a temporary position for a Manager of Investigations Assistant salary and benefit increments/ adjustments and to continue the File Awaiting Assignment process for another fiscal year. It also provides for \$35,000 to off-set a reduction in external recoveries in fiscal year 2011/12. The Capital budget has been restored to its Fiscal 2009/10 and prior year level of \$75,000. This will be primarily used to restore the IT purchase cycle.

This budget reflects the reality that the Office of the Ombudsperson has been and continues to be a very lean organization which over the past three years has taken several innovative approaches to deal with service demands within its resources (such as Early Resolution and Files Awaiting Assignment).

The fiscal 2011/12 budget request funds only a status quo situation. A short term "restore equilibrium budget" would also require the funding of three additional investigative positions and a survey to assess the results of our outreach initiatives. A longer term "improve service budget" would require funding for another two investigative positions; one additional Early Resolution Officer position; an assistant outreach, education and information officer; and a Deputy

Ombudsperson position. I hope that as the fiscal situation changes additional funding will be available in future years to allow the office to regain equilibrium and then move forward.

## **Mandate**

The Office of the Ombudsperson provides independent oversight of the administrative fairness of the practices of public authorities and acts as an impartial agency available to all persons in the province who believe they have not been treated fairly or reasonably by a public agency.

It deals with more than 8,000 inquiries and complaints about provincial ministries, commissions [e.g. Worksafe BC] and Crown corporations [e.g. BC Hydro and ICBC], as well as local governments, health authorities, school boards and self-regulating professions. It works in a consultative and constructive manner to achieve fair resolutions and improve the effectiveness of public administration in British Columbia.

The work of the Office directly assists both complainants and public agencies. In investigating individual complaints, as well as in systemic investigations, the Office always works to ensure the underlying causes of problems are identified and addressed so that problems will not recur.

The work of the Office contributes to confidence in and respect for good governance in the province and upholds the principles of openness, transparency and accountability which are indispensable in a free and democratic society.

## **Priorities for Fiscal 2011/12**

In the current fiscal year, the Office of the Ombudsperson focused on developing a new strategic plan; supporting a move to a new location for four Offices of the Legislature; and managing workload within existing resources in order to ensure timely delivery of support and services. This budget proposal will continue to require significant focus on this last area. The Office of the Ombudsperson will however look to make modest progress in four other areas in Fiscal 2011/12 – development of good governance materials; outreach to underserved communities; building partnerships/preventative ombudship; and developing a long-term strategic model for service delivery. These initiatives are consistent with the office’s current integrated process of intake, referral, early resolution, investigation of individual complaints, systemic investigations, monitoring of implementation of accepted recommendations, education and outreach.

### **Effectively Addressing Investigative Workload/Timely Delivery of Services**

This will continue to be the Office’s primary priority for Fiscal 2011/12. Timely investigation of individual complaints is essential to ensuring fair resolutions can be achieved. While a number of steps have been taken to achieve this, the continued existence of a Files Awaiting Assignment is not consistent with this principle of administrative fairness.

In Fiscal 2009/2010 2,709 files went to early resolution, investigation, or were on our files awaiting assignment list. This is the highest number since 1999. Early Resolution Officers and Ombudsperson Officers closed 2,646 files in Fiscal 2009/2010, the highest number since 2002. Eight years ago 23% of our intakes went on to investigation: last fiscal year it was 32%.

Our current focus on providing the best service possible to individual British Columbians who come to us with their concerns about what they believe is unfair or unreasonable treatment by public authorities has imposed limitations on our ability to achieve our other goals over the past fiscal year. Current resource constraints also limit the scope and timely delivery of Ombudsperson initiated and systemic investigations.

### **Good Governance Materials for Authorities**

To assist public authorities in identifying areas of risk for administrative unfairness and to evaluate and improve their own administrative processes the Office will develop good governance packages targeted at specific areas. These good governance packages will assist authorities in more consistently applying the principles of administrative fairness in their policies, procedures and decision making. This should lead to fewer complaints being brought to the Office of the Ombudsperson over time.

### **Outreach to Underserved Communities**

Our 2008 survey indicates that people whose first language is not English are significantly less aware of the role of the Office of the Ombudsperson and that there is somewhere they can go if they cannot resolve their concerns about unfair or unreasonable treatment with a public authority. This is of concern as often these are the very people who have the greatest need. We

will continue to build on our contacts with agencies that serve these communities and will be targeting tour and mobile intake activities in the coming year to increasing access for people in these communities.

#### **Building Partnerships/Preventative Ombudship**

In April 2011 the Office of the Ombudsperson will host the Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsmen annual meeting in Victoria. The membership of this group consists of parliamentary ombudspersons in Canada. This meeting will be followed in May 2011 by the bi-annual meeting of the broadly based Forum of Canadian Ombudsmen in Vancouver and in September by a meeting of banking service ombudsmen. The BC Office of the Ombudsperson will use these opportunities to build partnerships with other jurisdictions and to highlight the innovative work being done in BC. In addition we will be initiating a preventative ombudship project designed to provide the opportunity for agencies to consult with us before making changes or beginning initiatives that raise administrative fairness concerns to identify and assist in reducing problem areas.

#### **Developing a Long-Term Strategic Model for Service Delivery**

The Office of the Ombudsperson delivers services to both individuals and public authorities. In the next fiscal year we will be looking to develop a long-term strategic model that builds on our success and identifies new approaches and technologies that can maximize the effectiveness of our service delivery model.

## Statement of Operations

(Previous and Current Fiscal Years)

	Fiscal 2009/10 (previous year)		Fiscal 2010/11 (current year)
	Budget	Actual	Budget
<b>Funding</b>			
Voted Appropriation	4,773,000	4,721,577	4,945,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,773,000</b>	<b>4,721,577</b>	<b>4,945,000</b>
<b>Expense Type</b>			
Salaries	3,579,000	3,724,582	3,556,000
Employee Benefits	849,000	905,001	847,000
Travel	60,000	59,224	60,000
Centralized Management Support Services	415,000	396,088	0
Professional Services	175,000	97,717	135,000
Information Systems	80,000	75,626	186,000
Office and Business Expenses	205,000	284,449	205,000
Information, Advertising and Publications	60,000	29,485	60,000
Statutory Advertising & Publications	22,000	27,434	22,000
Utilities , Materials and Supplies	25,000	22,625	25,000
Amortization Expense	90,000	61,453	150,000
Building Occupancy	0	0	459,000
Internal Recoveries	(637,000)	(637,000)	(610,000)
External Recoveries	(150,000)	(325,107)	(150,000)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,773,000</b>	<b>4,721,577</b>	<b>4,945,000</b>
<b>Capital</b>			
Info. Systems, & Furniture & Equipment	75,000	67,117	20,000
Tenant Improvements	0	0	721,000
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>67,117</b>	<b>741,000</b>

## Proposed Budget by Standard Object of Expenditure (STOB)

STOB	Operating Budget	Fiscal 2010/11 Current Budget	Fiscal 2011/12 Proposed Estimates	Change	Fiscal 2012/13 Planned	Fiscal 2013/14 Planned
50	Salaries	3,252,000	<b>3,324,000<sup>1</sup></b>	72,000	3,275,000	3,275,000
51	Supplemental Salary	45,000	<b>45,000</b>	0	45,000	45,000
52	Employee Benefits	847,000	<b>885,000<sup>1</sup></b>	38,000	873,000	873,000
54	Officer of the Leg. salary	259,000	<b>259,000<sup>2</sup></b>	0	259,000	259,000
57	Travel	60,000	<b>60,000</b>	0	60,000	60,000
59	Centralized Mgmt Support Services	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	0
60	Professional Services	135,000	<b>135,000</b>	0	135,000	135,000
63	Information Systems	186,000	<b>186,000</b>	0	186,000	186,000
65	Office and Business Expenses	205,000	<b>205,000<sup>3</sup></b>	0	205,000	205,000
67	Info., Advertising and Publications	60,000	<b>60,000<sup>4</sup></b>	0	60,000	60,000
68	Statutory Advertising & Publications	22,000	<b>22,000<sup>5</sup></b>	0	22,000	22,000
69	Utilities , Materials and Supplies	25,000	<b>25,000<sup>6</sup></b>	0	25,000	25,000
73	Amortization Expense	150,000	<b>233,000<sup>7</sup></b>	83,000	233,000	233,000
75	Building Occupancy	459,000	<b>662,000<sup>8</sup></b>	203,000	662,000	662,000
88	Internal Recoveries	(610,000)	<b>(614,000)<sup>9</sup></b>	(4,000)	(614,000)	(614,000)
90	External Recoveries	(150,000)	<b>(115,000)<sup>10</sup></b>	35,000	(115,000)	(115,000)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,945,000</b>	<b>5,372,000</b>	<b>427,000</b>	<b>5,311,000</b>	<b>5,311,000</b>
<b>Capital Budget</b>						
	Info. Systems, & Furniture & Equip.	20,000	<b>75,000<sup>11</sup></b>	55,000	75,000	75,000
	Tenant Improvements	721,000	<b>0</b>	(721,000)	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>741,000</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>(666,000)</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>75,000</b>
<b>Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)</b>						
	Ombudsperson Core Services	33	<b>33</b>	0	33	33
	Shared Services	13	<b>13</b>	0	13	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>46<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>0</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>46</b>



**Notes:**

1. STOB 50 (Salaries) and STOB 52 (Employee Benefits) contains an allocation of \$11,000 for a researcher/librarian; salary increments/adjustments; and, funding for one temporary Manager of investigations Assistant for Fiscal 2011/12.
2. STOB 54 (Officer of the Legislature Salary) the salary for the Ombudsperson is tied by statute to the salary of the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court.
3. STOB 65 (Office and Business Expenses) includes costs for offsite storage, postal and courier charges, office supplies, printing and photocopying expenses (other than reports), and staff training (including mandated Pacific Leaders charges).
4. STOB 67 (Information, Advertising and Publications) includes costs for printing public reports other than the Annual Report and other informational material as well as notices of the Ombudsperson's office visits to communities across the province which provide access for all British Columbians to Ombudsperson services.
5. STOB 68 (Statutory Advertising and Publications) includes costs for preparation and printing of the Annual Report to the Legislature.
6. STOB 69 (Utilities, Materials and Supplies) includes costs for utilities and services such as shredding as well as processional journals and trade publications.
7. STOB 73 (Amortization Expense) is the cost of repaying the Capital Budget expenditures for Tenant Improvements, furniture and information systems hardware and software. Tenant improvements and furniture expenditures are amortized on a monthly basis over 5 years whereas information systems expenditures are amortized on a monthly basis over 3 years.
8. STOB 75 (Building Occupancy) is the Ombudsperson's share of the consolidated office space for the four independent offices at 947 Fort Street. The construction of the LEED Gold office space was completed on schedule and on budget and occupancy commenced in October 2010. The terms of the 15 year lease were presented to and approved by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in October 2008.
9. STOB 88 (Internal Recoveries) represents the costs reimbursed by the other offices participating in the shared services arrangement. It reflects a cost reduction per supported position and thus a reduction in internal recoveries.
10. STOB 90 (External Recoveries) represents the costs reimbursed by other ombudsman and similar offices that have contracted for purchase and support of the Case Tracker System. The amount budgeted represents the reasonably anticipated recoveries. It has declined in recent years. When recoveries have exceeded budgeted amounts, such surplus funds are used for office requirements such as supplementing investigative capacity or returned to the province's Consolidated Revenue Fund as surplus at the end of the fiscal year.
11. CAPITAL BUDGET is consistent with 2009/2010 and previous years. It is used for IT equipment and furniture. These capital amounts are repaid through amortization in STOB 73.
12. FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTEs). These figures do not include the position of Ombudsperson because the position is not filled under the Public Service Act. There has been no increase in FTEs as the researcher/librarian position has been reduced to .25FTE and the remaining .75 has been offset against the temporary Managers of Investigation Assistant position. The FTEs for providing Shared Services remains unchanged.

## Proposed Budget by Lines of Business

Business Area	Current Year	Planned		
	Fiscal 2010/11	Fiscal 2011/12	Fiscal 2012/13	Fiscal 2013/14

### Operating Budget (\$000)

Core Services				
- Intake/Referrals	498	<b>546</b>	539	539
- Early Resolution	453	<b>496</b>	490	490
- Investigations	2,855	<b>3,126</b>	3,088	3,088
- Systemic Investigations	725	<b>794</b>	784	784
Total Core Services	4,531	<b>4,962</b>	4,901	4,901
Shared Services	1,024	<b>1,024</b>	1,024	1,024
Less Recovery for Shared Services	(610)	<b>(614)</b>	(614)	(614)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,945</b>	<b>5,372</b>	<b>5,311</b>	<b>5,311</b>

### Capital Budget (\$000)

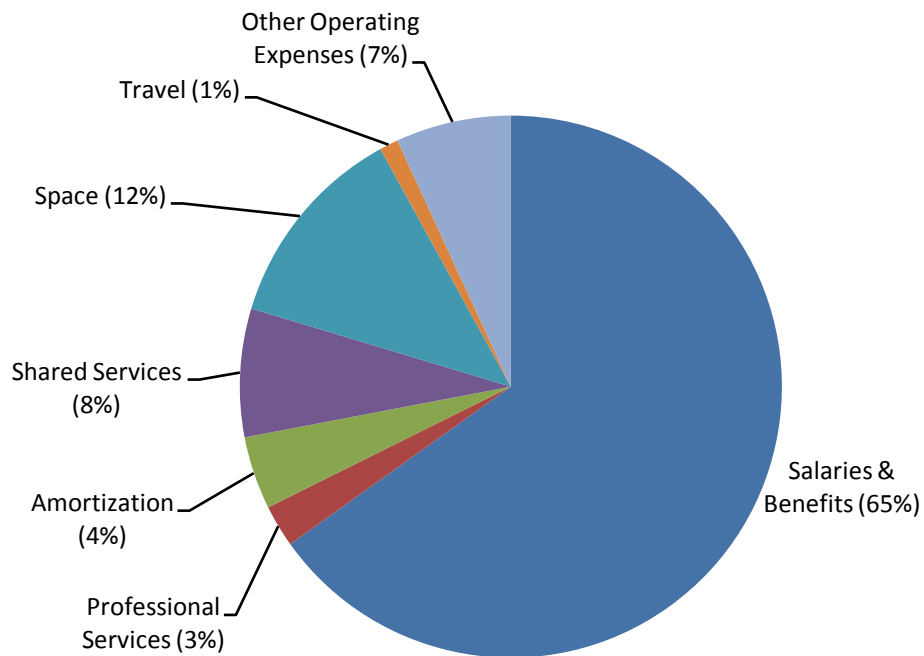
Info. Systems, furniture & equipment	20	<b>75</b>	75	75
Tenant Improvements	721	<b>0</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>

### Full Time Equivalent (FTEs)\*

Core Services	33	<b>33</b>	33	33
Shared Services	13	<b>13</b>	13	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>46</b>

\*The FTE count does not include the Ombudsperson. Officers of the Legislature are not appointed pursuant to the *Public Service Act*.

## Fiscal 2011/12 Proposed Operating Budget, by Expenditure Type Office of the Ombudsperson

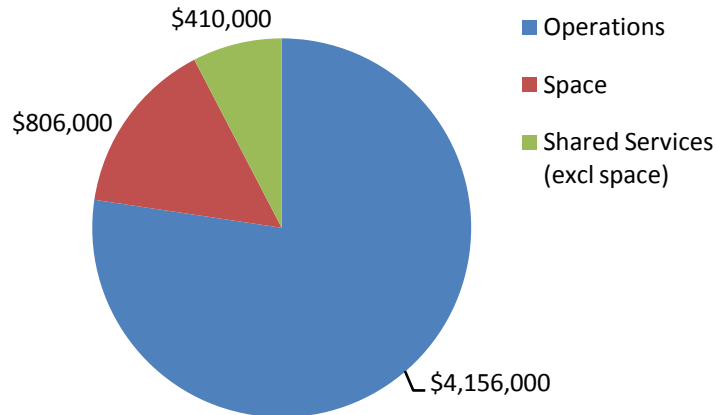


# Fiscal 2011/12 Proposed Space and Shared Services Budgets

## Operating Budget Request

Office of the Ombudsperson

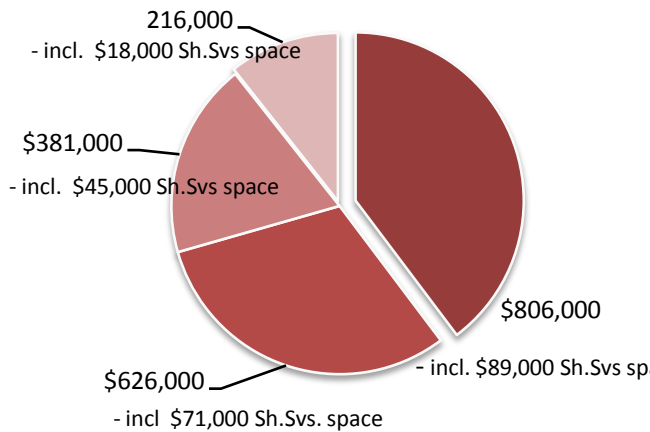
Total: \$5,372,000



## Space Budget, All Offices

(incl. Amortization of Tenant Improvement Capital Costs)

Total: \$2,029,000

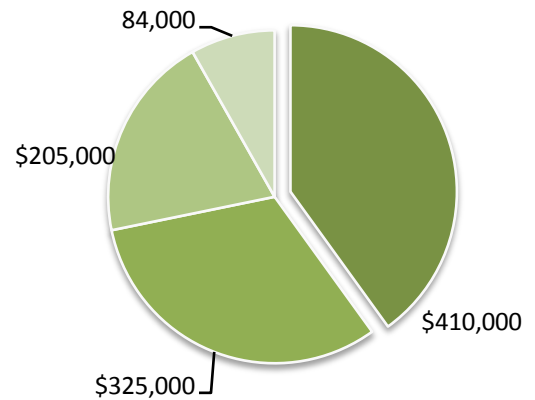


- Ombudsperson
- Info & Privacy Comm.
- Police Complaint Comm.
- Merit Commissioner

## Shared Services Budget, All Offices

(excl. Space for Shared Services)

Total: \$1,024,000



- Ombudsperson
- Info & Privacy Comm.
- Police Complaint Comm.
- Merit Commissioner