

BUDGET SUBMISSION

Fiscal Years 2015/2016 - 2017/2018



Office of the Ombudsperson

Presented to the

**Select Standing Committee on
Finance and Government Services**

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Overview of Office of the Ombudsperson Operations

The Office of the Ombudsperson was established in British Columbia in 1979. It has the broadest mandate of the ten provincial and territorial Ombudsperson Offices in Canada. It investigates complaints about the administrative unfairness of “matters of administration”, that is the actions, inaction, decisions, policies and procedures of more than 2,800 public agencies in British Columbia including ministries, provincial boards and commissions, Crown Corporations, health authorities, local governments, school boards, colleges, universities, and various regulated professions and occupations.

In addition to receiving and investigating individual concerns and complaints the Office of the Ombudsperson also delivers on its mandate to generally oversee the administrative actions of government authorities by conducting in-depth systemic investigations and reporting out on the results. Recent public reports have addressed issues of environmental protection, openness and transparency in local government, timely access to disability and social assistance benefits, and home and community care services for seniors.

“...with the establishment of an Ombudsman in British Columbia we will have [an organization which] can... provide additional service for our citizens, move aside the bureaucratic roadblocks, wade through the red tape...and recommend improvements to administrative practice and administrative procedure.”

[The Honourable Garde Gardom, 1977]

“In my view, the phrase ‘a matter of administration’ encompasses everything done by governmental authorities in the implementation of government policy. I would exclude only the activities of the legislature and the courts from the Ombudsman’s scrutiny.”

[B.C.D.C. v Friedmann, Supreme Court of Canada, 1984]

The core operational work of the office can be divided into three main areas; intake and early resolution, individual investigations, and systemic investigations. Each of these areas also contributes to the office’s on-going education and outreach initiatives.

The Intake and Early Resolution Team receives inquiries and complaints and provides information, assistance and referral services to complainants. As well team members deal with complaints that can be resolved quickly.

If a complaint cannot be resolved by the Intake and Early Resolution Team it is placed on the Files Awaiting Assignment List. These files are assigned to an investigator on one of the three individual investigation teams – the Health and Local Services Team, the Regulatory Programs Team and the Social Programs Team. The role of the investigator is to impartially investigate and, where an administrative unfairness is identified, to work to achieve a fair resolution.

“Ombudsman’s two primary roles are to investigate complaints and to generally oversee the administrative actions of government authorities with a view to upholding the democratic principles of openness, transparency and accountability.”

[Report of Special Committee to Appoint an Ombudsman, 2006]

The work done by the Intake and Early Resolution Team and the three Investigative Teams contributes to decisions about where a systemic investigation would be appropriate and likely to produce useful and positive outcomes.

For more information about the operations of the Office of the Ombudsperson please see Service Plan 2015/2016 - 2017/2018 and our website at www.bcombudsperson.ca.

Ombudsperson's Budget Request Fiscal 2015/2016

The Office of the Ombudsperson prepares this budget using a bottom-up approach. Any operational or capital funds unexpended in a fiscal year are returned to the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

The Office of the Ombudsperson budget is divided into two parts, Core Ombudsperson Operations and Corporate Shared Services. Core Ombudsperson Operations includes activities relating to the office's intake, early resolution, investigative, advisory, education and preventive activities. Corporate Shared Services includes activities relating to finance, administration, building operations, human resources and information technology. These corporate shared services are provided not only to the Office of the Ombudsperson but also to three other co-located Offices of the Legislature. The costs of these services are allocated on a proportional basis between the four supported offices and the contributions of the other supported offices to these costs are reflected under STOB 88 Internal Recoveries in the Statement of Operations tables in this submission.

This budget request is divided into three parts. The first part is a request for the funding necessary to avoid a reduction in services. The second part is a request for temporary funding for a two year period to reduce the number of files awaiting assignment and ensure timely resolutions of complaints. The third part is a request for permanent funding for an additional investigative position to augment the systemic investigation business area. This will also assist in initiatives to improve services to authorities looking for assistance in improving their internal dispute and important resolution processes.

Part 1 - Budget Request

This request is for an increase of \$218,000 to recover scheduled but unfunded non-discretionary increases in the benefit charge back rate, salary and benefits for Schedule A staff and management staff in 2014/2015 and scheduled increases for Schedule A staff in 2015/2016 (STOBs 50, 52, and 54). It also includes actual and anticipated increases to building operating costs for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016. As well it includes an off-set for reductions in external recoveries (STOB 90). This request affects both Core Ombudsperson Operations and Corporate Shared Services.

Part 2 - Budget Request

This request is for an increase of \$109,000 for the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 fiscal years only. It is to increase the investigative capacity by one position in order to reduce the number of files awaiting assignment.

Part 3 - Budget Request

This request is for an increase of \$109,000 to augment the resources devoted to systemic investigations and to improve advisory services and increase preventive Ombuds activities.

Statement of Operations Fiscal 2013/2014 and 2014/2015

STOB	Description	Fiscal 2013/14 (previous)		Fiscal 2014/15 (current)
		Budget	Actual	Budget
	Voted Appropriation	5,615,000	5,337,909	5,615,000
	Total	5,615,000	5,337,909	5,615,000
	Expenses			
50	Salaries	3,441,000	3,356,511	3,441,000
51	Supplemental Salary	107,000	65,312	107,000
52	Employee Benefits	908,000	879,517	908,000
54	Officer of the Leg. Salary	259,000	262,866	259,000
57	Travel	60,000	48,886	60,000
60	Professional Services	215,000	128,051	215,000
63	Information Systems	186,000	178,317	186,000
65	Office and Business Expenses	205,000	205,534	205,000
67	Information Reporting	60,000	75,650	60,000
68	Statutory Reporting	22,000	20,669	22,000
69	Utilities, Materials and Supplies	25,000	34,323	25,000
73	Amortization	233,000	195,989	233,000
75	Building Occupancy	685,000	687,393	685,000
88	Internal Recoveries	(693,000)	(693,000)	(693,000)
90	External Recoveries	(98,000)	(108,109)	(98,000)
	Total Expenses	5,615,000	5,337,909	5,615,000
	Capital Budget			
	Info Systems, Furniture & Equipment	75,000	70,718	75,000
	Total Capital	75,000	70,718	75,000

Budget Request by STOB Fiscal 2015/2016 – 2017/2018

STOB	Expense Type	2014/15 (current) Approved Budget	2015/16 Proposed Estimates	Change From Previous Year	Fiscal 2016/17 Planned	Fiscal 2017/18 Planned
50	Salaries	3,441,000	3,805,000¹	364,000	3,826,000	3,775,000
51	Supplemental Salary	107,000	107,000		107,000	107,000
52	Employee Benefits	908,000	1,043,000¹	135,000	1,048,000	1,035,000
54	Officer of the Leg. Salary	259,000	266,000²	7,000	266,000	266,000
57	Travel	60,000	60,000		60,000	60,000
60	Professional Services	215,000	190,000	(25,000)	210,000	210,000
63	Information Systems	186,000	186,000³		186,000	186,000
65	Office and Business Expenses	205,000	205,000⁴		205,000	205,000
67	Info., Advertising and Publications	60,000	60,000⁵		60,000	60,000
68	Statutory Advertising & Publications	22,000	22,000⁶		22,000	22,000
69	Utilities , Materials and Supplies	25,000	35,000⁷	10,000	37,000	37,000
73	Amortization Expense	233,000	184,000⁸	(49,000)	75,000	75,000
75	Building Occupancy	685,000	716,000⁹	31,000	751,000	756,000
88	Internal Recoveries	(693,000)	(760,000)	(67,000)	(760,000)	(785,000)
90	External Recoveries	(98,000)	(68,000)	30,000		
	Total	5,615,000	6,051,000	436,000	6,093,000	6,009,000

Capital Budget

Info. Systems, & Furniture & Equip.	75,000	75,000 ¹⁰		75,000	75,000
Total	75,000	75,000		75,000	75,000

Notes:

1. STOB 50 (Salaries) and STOB 52 (Employee Benefits) – Includes salaries for existing staff positions, the known financial impact of the salary increases for Schedule A (union classified) and Managers wage increase of 3%. It also includes an amount for the increase of one Ombudsperson Officer Position on a temporary basis and one on a permanent basis.
2. STOB 54 (Officer of the Legislature Salary) – The salary for the Ombudsperson is set by statute as equal to the salary of the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court.
3. STOB 63 (information systems) includes data lines, IDIR accounts, voice services, licensing, data communication, network security and supplies.
4. STOB 65 (Office & Business Expenses) — Includes costs for office stationary and supplies, offsite file storage, postal and courier charges, printing expenses (other than reports), news subscriptions, staff training, photocopier leases, and business meeting expenses.
5. STOB 67 (Informational Advertising & Publications) — Includes the cost of printing public reports other than the Annual Report to the Legislature.
6. STOB 68 (Statutory Advertising & Publications) — Covers the cost for preparing and printing the Annual Report to the Legislature.
7. STOB 69 (Utilities, Materials & Supplies) — Includes the cost for utilities, recycling, books and supplies.
8. STOB 73 (Amortization) — Is the cost of repaying the Capital budget expenditures for information systems hardware and software, tenant improvements and office furniture. Expenditures for information systems are usually amortized over three years. Expenditures for tenant improvements and office furniture are amortized over five years. Amortization costs for the original tenant improvements on office space will conclude during fiscal year 2015/16; however, this reduction will be offset in part by a scheduled increase in base rent (see STOB 75).
9. STOB 75 (Building Occupancy) — This is the office’s share of the costs for the consolidated office space for four Independent Offices of the Legislature at 947 Fort Street. Operating costs (e.g. building insurance, hydro and property taxes) are anticipated to increase in fiscal year 2015/16 and in subsequent years. The rate for base rent will increase from \$30/Square foot to \$33/square foot on November 1, 2015.
10. CAPITAL BUDGET — This is for the purchase of information systems hardware and software and office furniture, and is consistent with the Capital budget in fiscal year 2014/15. Capital amounts are repaid through amortization expense in STOB 73.

Budget Request by Ombudsperson Operations and Corporate Shared Services Fiscal 2015/2016

Ombudsperson Operations			
STOB	Fiscal 2014/15 Budget (Current Year)	Fiscal 2015/16 Budget Request	Change
50	2,653,000	2,940,000	287,000
51	107,000	107,000	0
52	721,000	826,000	105,000
54	259,000	266,000	7,000
57	60,000	60,000	0
60	135,000	110,000	(25,000)
63	171,000	171,000	0
65	169,000	169,000	0
67	60,000	60,000	0
68	22,000	22,000	0
69	25,000	35,000	10,000
73	215,000	172,000	(43,000)
75	685,000	716,000	31,000
	5,282,000	5,654,000	372,000
88	0	0	0
90	(98,000)	(68,000)	30,000
	5,184,000	5,586,000	402,000

Corporate Shared Services		
Fiscal 2014/15 Budget (Current Year)	Fiscal 2015/16 Budget Request	Change
788,000	865,000	77,000
0	0	0
187,000	217,000	30,000
0	0	0
0	0	0
80,000	80,000	0
15,000	15,000	0
36,000	36,000	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
18,000	12,000	(6,000)
0	0	0
	1,124,000	101,000
	(693,000)	(67,000)
	0	0
	431,000	34,000

Budget Request by Business Area Fiscal 2015/2016 - 2017/2018

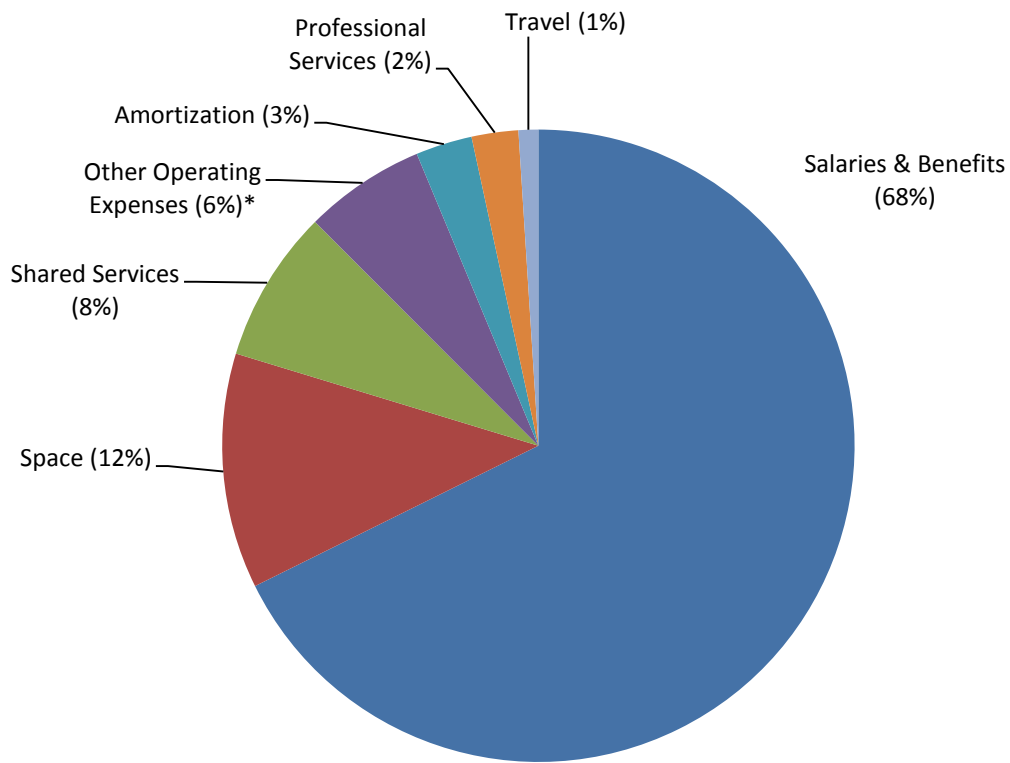
Business Area	Current Year	Plan		
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Operating Expenses(\$000)				
Ombudsperson Operations				
- Early Resolution	518	536	541	542
- Intake	570	590	595	596
- Investigations	3,266	3,492	3,517	3,414
- Systemic Investigations	830	968	975	977
Total Ombudsperson Operations	5,184	5,586	5,628	5,529
Total Cost of Shared Services	1,124	1,225	1,225	1,265
Less Recovery from Other Offices	(693)	(760)	(760)	(785)
Total Budget	5,615	6,051	6,093	6,009

Capital Expenditures (Consolidated Revenue Fund) (\$000)				
Info. Systems, furniture & equipment	75	75	75	75
Total	75	75	75	75

Budget Request by Expenditure Type

Fiscal 2015/2016

**Fiscal 2015/16 Requested Operating Budget,
by Expenditure Type
Office of the Ombudsperson**



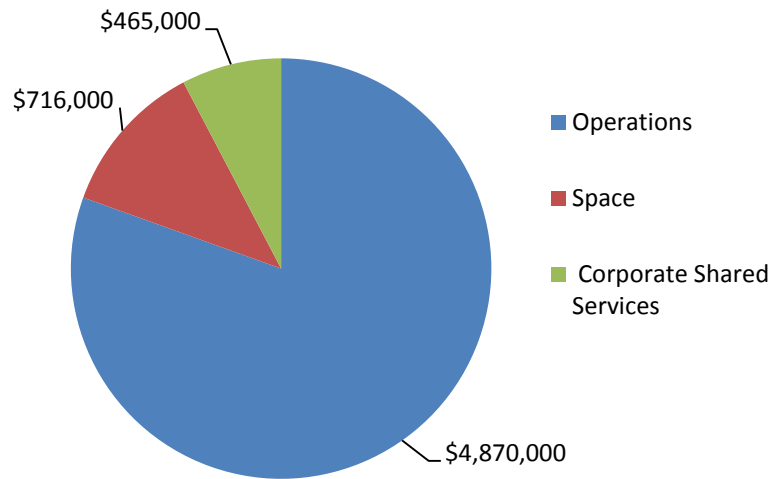
* Other Operating Expenses (STOBs) includes Information Systems (63), Office Expenses (65), Reporting (67 and 68), Utilities (69) and External Recoveries (90)

Budget Request by Space and Corporate Shared Services

Fiscal 2015/2016

Operating Budget Request

Office of The Ombudsperson
Total \$6,051,000



Corporate Shared Services Budget

All Offices

