

BUDGET SUBMISSION

Fiscal Years 2016/2017 - 2018/2019



Office of the Ombudsperson

Presented to the

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

November 18, 2015

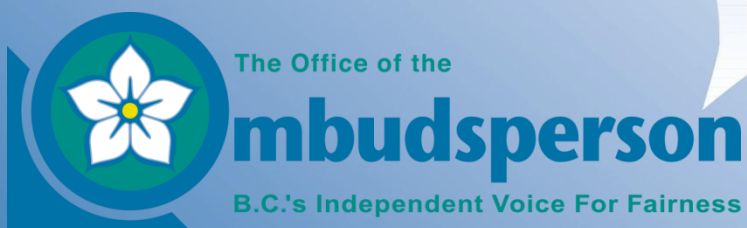


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Overview of Office of the Ombudsperson Operations

The Office of the Ombudsperson (originally named the “Ombudsman”) 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, inactions, 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 governing bodies of 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 the results. Recent systemic 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 under our Early Resolution Program.

“The Ombudsperson serves the people of British Columbia by receiving and investigating complaints of administrative unfairness from individuals and generally overseeing the administrative actions of provincial authorities in order to enhance openness, transparency and accountability.”

[Report of Special Committee to Appoint an Ombudsperson, 2015]

If a complaint cannot be resolved by the Intake and Early Resolution Team it is placed on a Files Awaiting Assignment List. These files are assigned from that list to an Ombudsperson Officer 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 Ombudsperson Officer is to impartially investigate and, where an administrative unfairness is identified, to work to achieve a fair resolution.

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. Those investigations are carried out by the Systemic Investigations Team.

For more information about the operations of the Office of the Ombudsperson please see Service Plan 2016/2017 - 2018/2019 and our website at www.bcombudsperson.ca.

Ombudsperson's Budget Request

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 for 2016/2017 is divided into three parts; Core Ombudsperson Operations, Corporate Shared Services and Committee Referral. **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. **Committee Referral** includes activities related to the July 29, 2015 referral by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services of the Ministry of Health terminations matter to the Ombudsperson for investigation and report.

This budget request has two main aspects. The first part is a request for one additional investigator position so that Core Ombudsperson Operations are able to match the demand for investigations with investigatory capacity and thus address a chronic issue. The second aspect is for funding to complete the investigation into the matter referred to the Ombudsperson on July 29, 2015 by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services under s. 10(3) of the *Ombudsperson Act*. Aside from these two requests, there is also an adjustment sought to address the impact of the recent court decision related to judicial compensation on the Ombudsperson's salary.

Budget Request to Match Investigatory Capacity with Demand

This request is for \$110,000 to fund one additional Ombudsperson Officer. A multi-year analysis of the complement of Ombudsperson Officers indicates that when staff turnover, leave, training and other factors are taken into account, the "active" investigator capacity is approximately 91% of actual complement. The monthly excess of investigation files opened over capacity would be addressed by one incremental investigator. Together with a rigorous process review planned for 2016/2017 the additional position will gradually eliminate the delay in service arising from the Files Awaiting Assignment Lists.

Budget Request to Complete Investigation into Legislative Committee Referral

This request is for an increase of \$415,000 for 2016/2017 compared to the budgeted amount allocated in 2015/16 for a total request for 2016/2017 of \$1,188,000. This amount is premised on reporting in the fall of 2016 followed by a short recovery phase to offset the impact of staffing lags in 2015/2016 which arose when investigators were reassigned from regular investigations to the referral investigation before their backfill replacements were hired, trained and deployed onto investigatory work.

Statement of Operations Fiscal 2014/2015 and 2015/2016

	Fiscal 2014/15 (previous)		Fiscal 2015/16 (current)
	Budget	Actual	Budget
Funding			
Voted Appropriation	5,615,000	5,520,991	6,575,000
Total	5,615,000	5,520,991	6,575,000
Expenses			
Salaries	3,807,000	3,787,669	4,433,000
Employee Benefits	908,000	1,070,341	1,095,000
Travel	60,000	32,557	55,000
Professional Services	215,000	125,096	166,000
Information Systems	186,000	162,422	249,000
Office and Business Expenses	205,000	186,092	300,000
Informational Advertising and Publications	60,000	36,791	60,000
Statutory Advertising and Publications	22,000	22,335	22,000
Utilities, Materials and Supplies	25,000	36,338	42,000
Amortization	233,000	194,395	193,000
Building Occupancy	685,000	655,469	786,000
Internal Recoveries	(693,000)	(709,000)	(761,000)
External Recoveries	(98,000)	(79,514)	(65,000)
Total Expenses	5,615,000	5,520,991	6,575,000
Capital Budget			
Information Systems, Furniture & Equipment	75,000	23,067	187,000
Total Capital	75,000	23,067	187,000

Budget Request by STOB Fiscal 2016/2017 – 2018/2019

STOB	Expense Type	2015/16 (current) Approved Budget	2016/17 Proposed Estimates	Change From Previous Year	Fiscal 2017/18 Planned	Fiscal 2018/19 Planned
50	Salaries	4,092,000	4,465,000	373,000	3,915,000	3,926,000
51	Supplemental Salary	75,000	75,000	0	57,000	57,000
52	Employee Benefits	1,095,000	1,196,000	101,000	1,059,000	1,062,000
54	Officer of the Leg. Salary	266,000	287,000	21,000	287,000	287,000
57	Travel	55,000	55,000	0	50,000	50,000
60	Professional Services	166,000	265,000	99,000	63,000	63,000
63	Information Systems	249,000	235,000	(14,000)	197,000	197,000
65	Office and Business Expenses	300,000	260,000	(40,000)	230,000	230,000
67	Info., Advertising & Publications	60,000	85,000	25,000	60,000	60,000
68	Statutory Adv. & Publications	22,000	22,000	0	22,000	22,000
69	Utilities, Materials and Supplies	42,000	48,000	6,000	39,000	41,000
73	Amortization Expense	193,000	115,000	(78,000)	50,000	50,000
75	Building Occupancy	786,000	837,000	51,000	756,000	756,000
88	Internal Recoveries	(761,000)	(763,000)	(2,000)	(778,000)	(785,000)
90	External Recoveries	(65,000)	(65,000)	0	(65,000)	(65,000)
	Total	6,575,000	7,117,000	542,000	5,942,000	5,951,000

Capital Budget

Info. Systems, Furniture &
Equipment

	187,000	75,000	(112,000)	75,000	75,000
Total	187,000	75,000	(112,000)	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.
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)—Includes 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 amortized over three years. Expenditures for tenant improvements and office furniture are amortized over five years. Amortization costs for the tenant improvements on office space arising from the move to the 947 Fort Street location will conclude during fiscal year 2015/2016; however, the expected reduction in costs will be offset by an 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 2015/2016 and in subsequent years. The rate for base rent will increase in fiscal year 2015/16.
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 2014/2015. Capital amounts are repaid through amortization expense in STOB 73.

Budget Request by Ombudsperson Operations, Corporate Shared Services and Committee Referral

STOB	Ombudsperson Operations			Corporate Shared Services			Committee Referral		
	Fiscal 2015/16 Budget (Current Year)	Fiscal 2016/17 Budget Request	Change	Fiscal 2015/16 Budget (Current Year)	Fiscal 2016/17 Budget Request	Change	Fiscal 2015/16 Budget (Current Year)	Fiscal 2016/17 Budget Request	Change
50	2,861,000	2,994,000	133,000	898,000	900,000	2,000	348,000	572,000	224,000
51	57,000	57,000	0	0	0	0	18,000	18,000	0
52	787,000	828,000	41,000	224,000	225,000	1,000	86,000	143,000	57,000
54	266,000	287,000	21,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
57	50,000	50,000	0	0	0	0	5,000	5,000	0
60	66,000	50,000	(16,000)	13,000	13,000	0	100,000	202,000	102,000
63	116,000	132,000	16,000	65,000	65,000	0	38,000	38,000	0
65	194,000	194,000	0	36,000	36,000	0	70,000	30,000	(40,000)
67	60,000	60,000	0	0	0	0	0	25,000	25,000
68	22,000	22,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
69	37,000	39,000	2,000	0	0	0	5,000	9,000	4,000
73	160,000	50,000	(110,000)	0	0	0	33,000	65,000	32,000
75	716,000	756,000	40,000	0	0	0	70,000	81,000	11,000
	5,392,000	5,519,000	127,000	1,236,000	1,239,000	3,000	773,000	1,188,000	415,000
88	0	0	0	(760,000)	(763,000)	(3,000)	0	0	0
90	(65,000)	(65,000)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	5,327,000	5,454,000	127,000	476,000	476,000	0	773,000	1,188,000	415,000

Budget Request by Business Area Fiscal 2016/2017 - 2018/2019

	Current Year	Plan		
Business Area	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19

Operating Expenses (\$000)

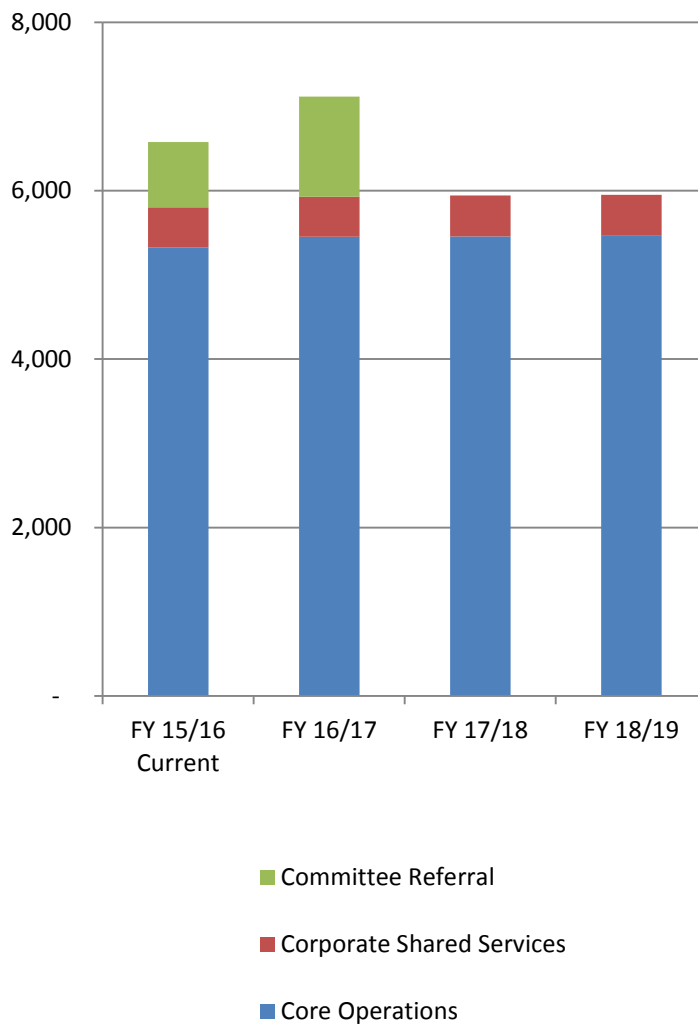
Ombudsperson Operations				
- Early Resolution	472	472	475	476
- Intake	684	684	688	690
- Investigations	3,526	3,653	3,649	3,648
- Systemic Investigations	643	643	646	648
- Referral investigation	773	1,188	0	0
Total Ombudsperson Operations	6,099	6,641	5,458	5,463
Total Cost of Shared Services	1,236	1,239	1,262	1,273
Less Recovery from Other Offices	(760)	(763)	(778)	(785)
Total Budget	6,575	7,117	5,942	5,951

Capital Expenses (\$000)

Info. Systems, Furniture & Equipment	187	75	75	75
Total	187	75	75	75

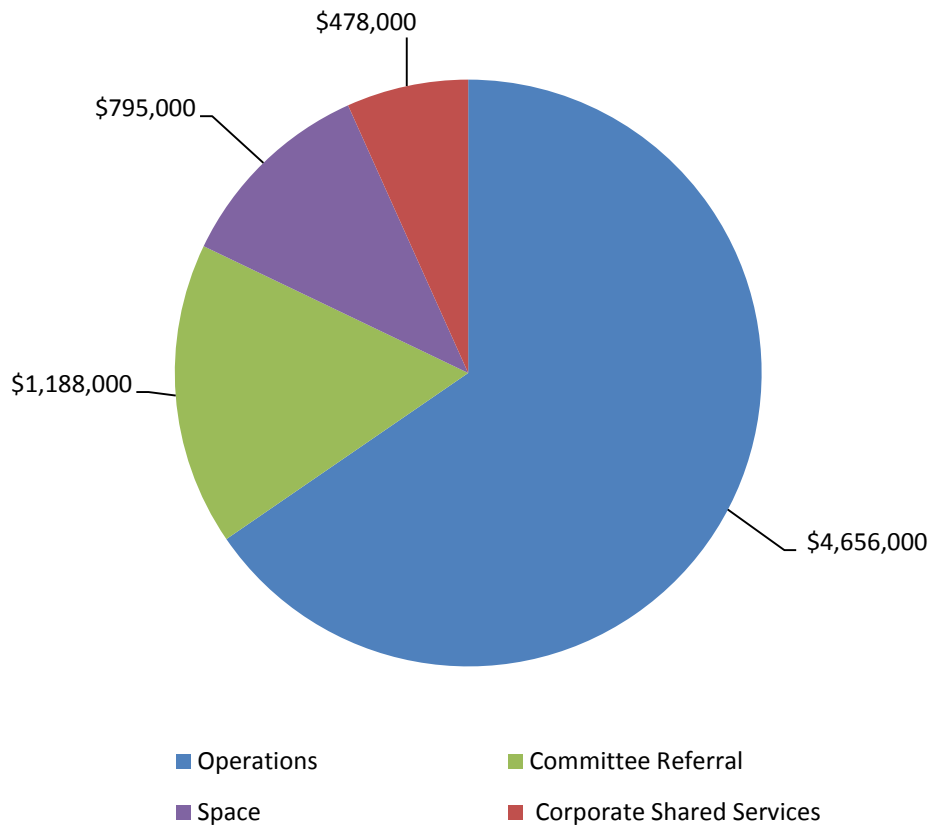
Budget Request Fiscal 2016/2017 – 2018/2019

Budget Request Fiscal 2016/17 - 2018/19



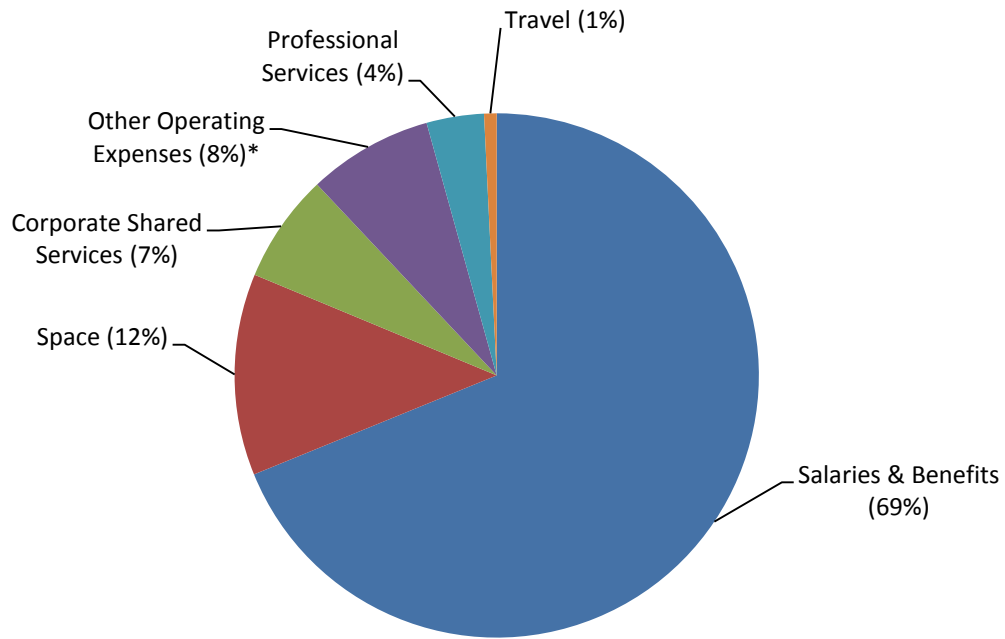
Budget Request by Expenditure Area

Operating Budget Request Office of the Ombudsperson Total \$7,117,00



Budget Request by Expenditure Type

**Fiscal 2016/17 Requested Operating Budget,
by Expenditure Type
Office of the Ombudsperson**



* Other Operating STOBs includes Information Systems (63), Office Expenses (65), Reporting (67 and 68), Utilities (69), Amortization (73) and Recoveries (90)

Corporate Shared Services Allocated Budget Request by Officer of the Legislature

Corporate Shared Services Budget All Offices

