

SERVICE PLAN

Fiscal Years 2013/2014 - 2015/2016



Office of the Ombudsperson

Presented to the

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

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Table of Contents

Overview	1
Mandate and Strategic Goals	2
Measuring our Performance.....	3
2013/14 Objectives.....	5
Strategic Direction Fiscal 2015-2017	5
Appendix: Performance Measurement (Alternative Approach)	6

Overview

“The role of British Columbia’s Ombudsperson is to receive and investigate complaints of administrative unfairness from individuals and to generally oversee the administrative actions of Provincial public authorities to enhance openness, transparency and accountability.”¹

The Office of the Ombudsperson represents the interests of the people of British Columbia and the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia in ensuring that all people in British Columbia are treated fairly by provincial public authorities.

It has jurisdiction over all provincial ministries, boards, commissions and Crown corporations, as well as local governments, health authorities, colleges, universities, school boards and self-regulating professions and organizations.

The office deals with approximately 8,000 inquiries and complaints a year. Fifty-four percent of files opened involve provincial ministries; 15% provincial commissions and boards; and 12% Crown corporations.

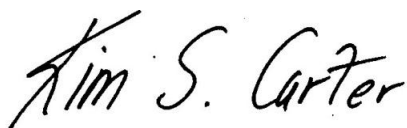
In the past six years the Office of the Ombudsperson has established a highly productive systemic investigations team and an innovative and effective early resolution program. It is recognized nationally and internationally for its work in these areas.

The work of the office is carried out through an integrated process of intake, referral, early resolution, individual investigations and systemic investigations.

The Office of the Ombudsperson functions within a broader national and international ombudsperson community and in conjunction with the seven other Officers of the Legislature.

In addition, the Shared Services component of the office provides IT, financial, administrative, HR and corporate services support to three other Offices of the Legislature.

In 2013/2014 the Office of the Ombudsperson will focus on maintaining its Early Resolution and Systemic Investigation capacity; reaching out to underserved communities; reducing delays in addressing individual investigations; and work towards preventative ombudsmanship initiatives.



Kim Carter
Ombudsperson
Province of British Columbia

¹ Special Committee to Appoint an Ombudsperson Report May 2012 page 1

Mandate and Strategic Goals

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Legislative Framework</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ombudsperson Act</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Vision</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>British Columbia’s Independent Voice for Fairness</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Mandate</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>To ensure that every person in British Colombia is treated fairly in the provision of public services; to promote and foster fairness in public administration; and to uphold the democratic principles of openness, transparency and accountability.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Guiding Principles</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Continuous Improvement, Equality, High Quality Service, Integrity, Leadership, Respect, Teamwork, Trusting Environment</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strategic Goals</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Enhance Understanding of Principles of Good Governance</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ensure Administrative fairness</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Provide Quality Service</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Support a Workplace of Excellence</i></p>

Measuring our Performance

The success factors set out in our 2010 – 2014 Strategic Plan are:

- increased public and stakeholder awareness and understanding of administrative fairness and the role of the Ombudsperson Office
- thorough, impartial and timely investigations
- improved administrative fairness through focused, relevant recommendations and changes in actions, practices policies and regulations
- maintaining a healthy workplace environment

2011/2012 Report

To measure our performance in achieving our strategic goals and measuring progress towards our success factors we have developed key performance indicators. Our 2011/2012 Performance Measures Matrix is set out below.

Performance Measures Matrix				
Strategic Goal	Outcome	Key Performance Indicator	Target	2011/2012
Enhance Understanding of Principles of Good Governance	Increased public and stakeholder awareness of administrative fairness and role of Ombudsperson Office	% increase in website use	10%	40%
Ensure Administrative fairness	Useful Systemic Reports	Reports identify key problem areas and provide useful recommendations	2 reports	3 reports
Provide Quality Service	Timely access to office	% of calls answered within 45 seconds	80%	82%
	Timely completion of investigation	% of investigative files completed and closed within 3 months of acceptance of complaint	70%	51%
Support a Workplace of Excellence	Well trained staff	% of staff who receive professional training	90%	90%

2012/2013 Interim Report on Performance

Our 2012 – 2013 goals of ending the delay caused by the file awaiting assignment process put in place on a temporary basis in September 2009; augmenting the systemic investigation team to allow it to produce more and more timely systemic investigation reports; and establishing the capacity to offer proactive legislative, policy and program review were reassessed and implementation was postponed until these initiatives can be funded.

Gains are being made in improving the accessibility of our website and our services to British Columbians whose first language is not English and we have used the momentum generated by our systemic report on home and community care for seniors to increase understanding of our office among that demographic.

Our recent hirings remain competitive but we have chosen to restrict them to in-service candidates in light of current budgetary constraints.

Modest investments in new technology such as dual monitors for certain staff have increased well-being and efficiency.

Progress has also been made in the areas of producing good governance materials for authorities. A Special Report on *“Open Meetings: Best Practices Guide for Local Governments”* was published in September 2012 and distributed in conjunction with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities annual meeting.

The recognition of British Columbia’s leading role in conducting systemic investigations continues with invitations to provide training to peer organizations including the United States Ombudsman Association; the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman; and the North West Ombuds Group; and the Canadian Revenue Agency Ombudsman office.

2013/14 Objectives

The Office of the Ombudsperson 2013/2014 objectives are:

- to maintain Early Resolution Program capacity and evaluate its operation and potential for growth
- to further develop systemic investigation team capacity
- to increase contact with underserved communities
- to reduce the delay in commencing individual investigations
- to develop a preventative ombudsmanship program
- to continue to play a leadership role in the ombudsman community
- to develop a management succession plan for 2014 – 2017

Strategic Direction Fiscal 2015-2017

The Office of the Ombudsperson’s Strategic Direction for fiscal 2015 – 2017 is to increase the effective use of technology; to provide timely, effective resolutions to individual complaints to continue to build the early resolution and systemic investigation programs; to expand outreach initiatives; to seek greater legislative engagement and an updating of the *Ombudsperson Act*; and to develop an effective “Preventative Ombudsmanship” program to benefit members of the public and authorities.

Appendix: Performance Measurement (Alternative Approach)

The Best of Care: Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia (Part 2)

Systemic Report

- 8 public authorities
- \$2 billion program
- Covers home and community care general; home support; assisted living; residential care
- 143 findings
- 176 recommendations
- 446 pages

Authority Response

- Government Action Plan on Improving Care for B.C. Seniors

Media Interest

Over 8 days following release of report

- 60 plus TV, radio broadcast and print articles related to the Seniors report
- A 242% increase in visits to www.bcombudsperson.ca
- 1,250 plus electronic downloads of the reports
- Significant increase in “visits via social referral” to Ombudsperson website

Public Interest

Since February 14, 2012

- 40 presentations
- 20 communities across British Columbia
- 2,300+ attendees
- Report and Overview reprint

Stakeholder Response

Support from

- Private and not-for-profit service providers/facility operators
- Staff/caregivers
- Health advocates
- Seniors and their families

Comments

- *“By providing a roadmap to improve the quality, efficiency and transparency of the public system for families and front-line care providers, [the] report represents a turning point for seniors care in B.C.”*
BC Care Providers Association
- *“There has never been an investigation of this magnitude in this province. [The] recommendations are concrete and we urge the government and health authorities to take action to make significant changes to the way seniors receive care in B.C.”*
B.C. Government and Service Employees’ Union president
- *“I agree with the ombudsperson when she observes that the ministry and health authorities do not have an adequate program in place to ensure seniors and families are informed of availability of home and community care services, and the opportunity to have their eligibility for subsidized services assessed.”*

“I agree with the ombudsperson when she concludes that the Ministry has not properly analyzed if the home support program that we presently have is meeting its goal of assisting seniors to live in their homes as long as possible.”

“The ombudsperson in her report has also analyzed the ministry’s decision to maintain two separate legislative frameworks for residential care, which she observes has resulted in unfair differences in the care and services seniors receive and the fees they pay. We agree...”

“[The report] is, as I have mentioned, extremely detailed and it has, I can assure you, informed our direction in setting an action plan and highlighted the need to move forward.”

Minister of Health