

SERVICE PLAN

2017/2018 – 2019/2020



Presented to the
**Select Standing Committee on
Finance and Government Services**

November 1, 2016



The Office of the

mbudsperson

B.C.'s Independent Voice For Fairness

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MESSAGE FROM THE OMBUDSPERSON

I am pleased to present the 2017/2018-2019/2020 Service Plan for the Office of the Ombudsperson.

Included in this Service Plan is a report on our service performance for 2015/2016, an interim report on progress on 2016/2017 initiatives, and a plan setting out our office's key priorities and targets for 2017/18 and beyond.

This year's Service Plan represents a transition from one strategic planning framework to another, with 2016/2017 being the first year in which priorities and targets are determined within a broader strategic framework set out in our new 2016-2021 Strategic Plan which was tabled with the Legislative Assembly in May, 2016.

The framework established under the new Strategic Plan is outlined in the next pages of this Service Plan, including our Vision, Mandate and Principles, our Strategic Goals and Objectives and long term Strategies we will apply to realize our goals over the next 5 years.

We report on the completed fiscal year of 2015/2016, summarizing our major activities and accomplishments and reporting on performance measures that were established for that year.

Our interim report for 2016/2017 outlines the specific operational activities we have prioritized in the current fiscal year, sets out the specific performance measures we will report on in 2017, and provides an interim report on progress towards our annual objectives.

Next, we provide our plan for 2017/2018, setting out our major operational priorities and performance measures and explaining how they will support us on the path towards implementing our longer term strategies and realizing the goals and objectives set out in our Strategic Plan. We highlight our major 2017/18 initiative, the commencement of a three-year pilot project to proactively work with public authorities to reduce unfairness in public administration.

Finally, we conclude with an outline of our strategic direction and key targets for the following two years, 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, pointing the way towards the conclusion of our current five year plan and the start of the next strategic cycle in 2020/2021.

This 2017/18-2019/20 Service Plan, together with our 2017/18 Budget Submission represent a fully costed proposal to fulfil our vital role in protecting the right of British Columbians to fair and reasonable treatment, effective public administration and good governance.



Jay Chalke
Ombudsperson

OUR VISION, MANDATE AND PRINCIPLES

Our Vision: **British Columbia's Independent Voice for Fairness**

Our Mandate: *The Ombudsperson Act*

We exist to:

- ensure that the people of British Columbia are treated fairly in the provision of public services
- promote and foster fairness and accountability in public administration
- provide an independent avenue of last resort for individuals with complaints about government services

We deliver our mandate by:

- responding to inquiries from the public
- educating citizens and public authorities on issues of administrative fairness
- conducting thorough, impartial and independent investigations of complaints
- independently initiating investigations of apparent administrative unfairness
- facilitating resolutions of complaints and improvements to the administration of public policy through consultation and recommendations
- reporting to the Legislative Assembly and the people of British Columbia to bring attention to matters of administrative unfairness and the work of the Office generally

External Principles

- we are fair and impartial
- we are professional and thorough
- we listen with respect
- we seek resolutions that are principled and practical

Internal Principles

- we respect and support each other as a team
- we are committed to high standards of practice in our work
- we strive continuously to improve our services
- we value the expertise and knowledge of our staff

2016 – 2021 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1 People who need us are aware of our services and can access them

- A Improve accessibility of services
- B Focus outreach on people most likely to benefit from our services

2 Complaints are addressed efficiently

- A Process new complaints more effectively
- B Reduce wait times for files awaiting assignment to investigators
- C Improve effectiveness and efficiency in concluding individual complaint investigations through supportive policies, tools and training

3 Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration

- A Increase public reporting
- B Improve linkage with Legislative Assembly to enhance consideration of tabled reports
- C Demonstrate influence of investigations in improving public administration

4 Public authorities are supported in improving administration

- A Increase work with public authorities to improve their dispute resolution processes
- B Enhance proactive consultations with public authorities about emerging issues relating to their programs
- C Promote transparency and fair practice among public authorities undergoing program change

5 Staff are recognized for their expertise

- A Provide ongoing professional learning and development opportunities for staff
- B Enhance development and retention of operational subject matter knowledge and expertise

2016 – 2021 STRATEGIES

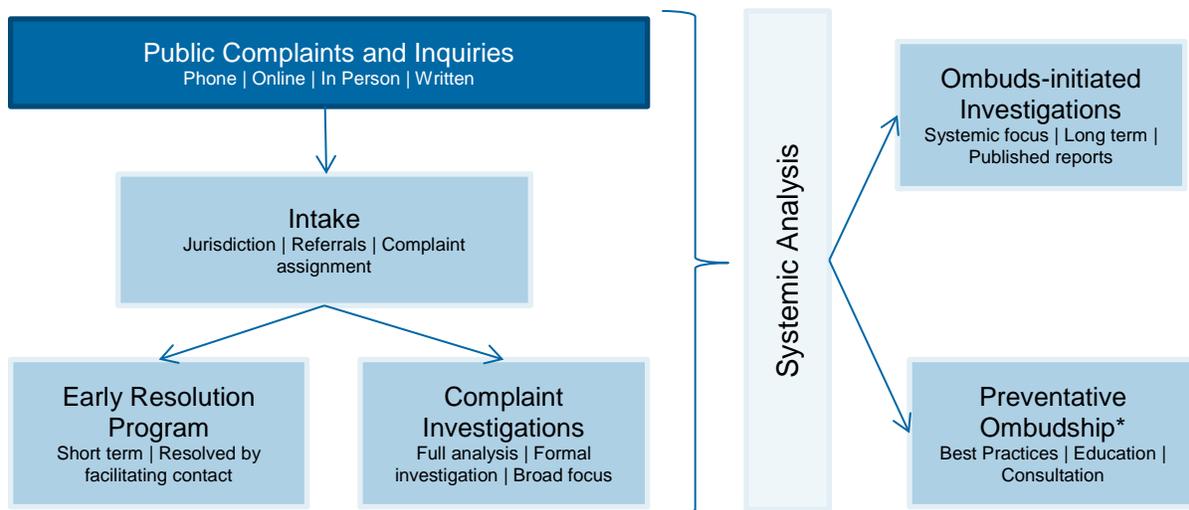
- 1** Develop a public outreach strategy focused on underserved British Columbians
- 2** Build a model of preventative ombudship focusing on proactive engagement
- 3** Review our internal processes to reduce delays in service
- 4** Renew and improve internal policies and knowledge management framework to enhance service
- 5** Maximize impact by applying a systemic approach wherever possible
- 6** Develop and implement a revised professional and career development framework

HOW WE DO OUR WORK

Office of the Ombudsperson Core Operational Activities

Our core operations are carried out through an integrated approach involving receiving and responding to complaints and inquiries from the public at intake, the early resolution program, individual complaint investigations, ombudsperson-initiated investigations and limited preventative activities that arise out of our complaint-driven processes.

This service plan establishes a budget-contingent initiative to utilize organizational expertise and experience to proactively prevent unfairness by public authorities. Details are set out below at page 16.



Note: Investigations can also be initiated on referral from the Legislative Assembly or one of its committees.

*Contingent on 2017/18-2019/20 Pilot Project Funding

Office of the Ombudsperson Corporate Shared Services Activities

The Office of the Ombudsperson provides support to four Offices of the Legislature through a cost effective Corporate Shared Services support organization. These shared support services include finance, human resources, facilities and IT services.

2015/2016 PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

The 2015/2016 fiscal year was a year of transition and change for the Office of the Ombudsperson:

- A new Ombudsperson, Jay Chalke, was appointed to the position following the retirement of previous Ombudsperson Kim Carter.
- In July 2016 a major investigation was referred to the Ombudsperson by the Legislative Assembly's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, the first referral under section 10(3) of the *Ombudsperson Act* in the 36-year history of the office.
- The Office conducted broad consultations with staff, authorities, the public and legislators to develop the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan to guide the organization forward through the next five years.

Through this renewal the office remained focused on our primary mandate to respond to and investigate complaints from members of the public about public administration. We received 7849 inquiries and complaints in 2015/2016, more than in any fiscal year since 2011/2012.

We were cognizant that there could be short term negative impacts on our service to the public caused by the necessary reassignment of staff to the referral investigation. We were able to mitigate those impacts over the course of the year, primarily by hiring and training new investigative staff through an additional funding allocation.

In addition to the significant work on the referral investigation and our handling of individual complaints, in March 2016 we released Special Report No. 36, *Bylaw Enforcement: Best Practices Guide for Local Governments*, providing local governments and British Columbians with guidance on the fair and effective administration of local bylaws.

The Workplace Environment Survey completed in 2015 indicated a highly engaged Ombudsperson workforce. It also helped us to identify areas where there are opportunities to improve. This data has been of great benefit in informing our strategic and operational planning processes.

The table below reports on performance indicators for the 2015/2016 fiscal year. These indicators were established in our 2015/16-2017/18 Service Plan to measure success in achieving strategic goals under the 2010-2014 Strategic Plan.

2015/2016 Performance Measures Matrix

2010 – 2014 Strategic Goal	Outcome	Key Performance Indicator	2015/16 Target	2015/16 Results
Enhance Understanding of Principles of Good Governance	Increased public and stakeholder awareness of administrative fairness and role of Ombudsperson Office	% increase in website	10%	5%
		Deliver presentations on administrative fairness	30	48
		Conduct outreach tours	1	1
Ensure Administrative Fairness	Useful Systemic Reports	Reports identify key problem areas and provide useful recommendations	2 reports	1 report
		Report out on status of implementation of systemic recommendations	100%	100%
Provide Quality Service	Timely access to office	% of calls answered within 45 seconds	80%	83%
	Timely completion of investigation	% of investigative files completed and closed within 3 months of acceptance of complaint	70%	76%
Support a Workplace of Excellence	Highly skilled staff	Completion of 2016 - 2021 Strategic Plan	100%	100%
		% of staff who receive professional training	90%	95%

2016/2017 INTERIM REPORT ON PERFORMANCE

For year one of our new 2016-2021 Strategic Plan, we have focused significant efforts on policy renewal, process review, and identifying new approaches and initiatives to strengthen our capacity and provide more efficient and effective oversight of public administration in British Columbia.

The following summarizes our major accomplishments in 2016/2017 so far, with reference to the 2016-2021 Strategic Goals they contribute to:

1. *People who need us are aware of our services and can access them*
 - Conducted two public outreach tours in the South Cariboo and the Whistler-Kamloops corridor.
2. *Complaints are addressed efficiently*
 - Commenced a comprehensive review and update of our policy and practice relating to the handling of new complaints at intake about specific authorities, including external referrals, bringing our practice up to date and ensuring quality, timely service to the public.
 - Reduce the Files Awaiting Assignment list in accordance with the three year plan resulting in more timely service to complainants.
3. *Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration*
 - Released Special Report No. 38, *Under Inspection: The Hiatus in B.C. Correctional Centre Inspections*.
4. *Public authorities are supported in improving administration*
 - Provided follow-up on *Bylaw Inspection* best practices guide, including report distribution to local governments and presentations to municipal leaders and bylaw staff.
5. *Staff are recognized for their expertise*
 - Developed a revised training and professional development framework being piloted through remainder of 2016/2017.

In 2016/2017, the conduct of the July 29, 2015 Committee referral investigation continues to be a significant undertaking and its successful completion is a key operational priority for the current fiscal year, as is minimizing any negative impacts on our core services arising from the continued allocation of experienced investigative staff to the referral investigation.

Major areas of focus for the remainder of 2016/2017 include:

- Completion of the Committee referral investigation.
- Finalization of three year project deliverables and evaluation criteria for the preventative ombudship initiative focusing on proactive engagement with authorities; (assuming 2017/18 budget received for pilot project).
- Development of a comprehensive knowledge management strategy to support and inform work on individual complaint files, systemic investigations and preventative opportunities.
- Complete a comprehensive internal process review focusing on our Intake and Early Resolution processes to identify strategies to increase efficiency and enhance service to the public.
- Ongoing review and refresh of the office's administrative policy framework.

Performance measures for 2016/2017 that will be reported upon in our next Service Plan are set out separately below under Performance Measurement.

2017/2018 PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

In the second year of our five year Strategic Plan, our priorities turn both to concluding the review and refresh of our policies and processes, and to implementing the ideas and initiatives that emerge from those exercises. 2017/2018 is focused on increasing our impact – improving the effectiveness and efficiency of our intake and investigative processes, leveraging our knowledge and investigative data to take impactful preventative action on a continuing basis, targeting our outreach and education efforts where they are most needed, and finding new ways to evaluate and demonstrate our effectiveness.

Our operational priorities for 2017/2018 are:

- Contingent on funding approval, implementing a new model of preventative ombudship under a three-year pilot project (see separate section on preventative ombudship project below);
- Reducing the wait period for files awaiting assignment to investigators in accordance with the objectives in year two of the three year backlog reduction project and funding; and
- Developing a revised approach to performance measurement for the 2018/2019 fiscal year and beyond.

More detailed initiatives for 2017/2018 are set out under their related goals below:

1. People who need us are aware of our services and can access them

- Implement targeted strategies to increase awareness and promote access for groups we have identified as underserved.
- Continue public outreach tours focusing on underserved communities.
- Enhance the accessibility of the Office of the Ombudsperson's complaint process through effective use of technology.

2. Complaints are addressed efficiently

- Conduct a comprehensive review of our investigative processes to identify strategies to increase efficiency and enhance service to the public.
- Expand the Early Resolution program to promote more timely resolutions on less complex complaints.

3. *Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration*

- Restore the systemic investigation team to regular staffing and operations following conclusion of referral investigation.
- Conduct a comparative review of complaint resolution processes within jurisdictional authorities to evaluate effectiveness and identify best practices.

4. *Public authorities are supported in improving administration*

- Implement a new model of preventative ombudship under a three-year pilot project to better leverage our expertise and investigative experience to support authorities in improving public administration.
- Enhance reporting to authorities with a focus on issue tracking.

5. *Staff are recognized for their expertise*

- Implement revised professional training and development framework on a permanent basis.
- Provide ongoing professional training for all staff.
- Operationalize our knowledge management strategy to ensure that data gathering, investigative evidence and research is applied strategically to inform our investigations and communications with authorities and the public, and to enable an evidence-based approach to identify opportunities for preventative action and systemic investigation.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

The specific performance indicators below for the 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 fiscal years will be reported on in future Service Plans. These indicators include statistical targets focused on our ongoing core operational activities along with shorter term targets for completing major initiatives and projects that support our strategic goals and objectives.

The work of the Ombudsperson presents inherent challenges from a performance measurement perspective. The outcomes of our investigations are highly dependent on the nature of the individual complaints we receive, and the implementation of settlements and recommendations from those investigations depends on external actors as well as our own efforts. As a result, our office's past efforts to identify a more qualitative approach to performance assessment have had limited success. An examination of how we may better evaluate and report upon the quality, outcomes, and impact of our work is a priority for our office in the 2017/2018 fiscal year.

Internally, we also plan to identify how workplace environment surveys can be incorporated more effectively into our performance evaluation and operational planning.

It is hoped that this will result in improvements in our ability to gather relevant performance data and report on areas that will better illustrate the overall quality of our services, and the outcomes and public benefit generated by our investigations and our preventative actions.

Specific measures and targets for 2018/2019 and beyond will be established in the 2018/2019-2020/2021 Service Plan.

2016-2021 Strategic Goal	Performance Indicator	2016/2017 Target	2017/2018 Target
<i>People who need us are aware of our services and can access them</i>	# of outreach tours conducted	2	2
	# of presentations to the public	20	20
<i>Complaints are addressed efficiently</i>	% of non-investigated files concluded within 30 days	85%	90%
	% of investigations concluded within 180 days	75%	80%
<i>Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration</i>	% of investigations settled	30%	30%
	# of investigative/best practices reports released	2	3
<i>Public authorities are supported in improving administration</i>	# of presentations to authorities	20	20
<i>Staff are recognized for their expertise</i>	develop and implement a revised professional and career development framework	100% completion of pilot of draft framework	100% implementation of final framework

PREVENTATIVE OMBUDSHIP – THREE-YEAR PILOT PROJECT 2017/18 – 2019/20

The 2016-2021 Strategic Plan sets out, as one of the core strategic approaches, that the Ombudsperson will build a model of preventative ombudship focusing on proactive engagement. This initiative was broadly favoured during consultations to develop the strategic plan.

In the past, the office has been able to engage in some preventative activities, but these have been limited by resources. These activities have been seen as positive, worthwhile contributions to fair public administration.

Having highlighted the development of a model of preventative ombudship to promote fair public administration by public authorities through collaborative approaches, the challenge is how to implement it in the context of the office's budgetary framework. The budget is fully committed to meeting the service demands from individual complainants.

The preventative ombudship initiative is thus highly budget contingent. In the absence of specific funding the ability of the office to deliver on preventative initiatives will be constrained. However, by leveraging existing organizational knowledge and expertise an effective preventative pilot program can efficiently be accomplished at reasonable cost. The preventative work will be supported by our knowledge management strategy, a framework which will support the collection, organization and interpretation of investigative and complaint data to identify trends, emerging administrative challenges, and best practices. The interpretation of this data forms the evidentiary basis to target specific opportunities where preventative action may reduce the need for intensive formal investigations to resolve issues arising from complaints. At the same time we will work proactively with authorities directly to identify areas where education or supportive guidance may prevent unfairness.

Our framework for preventative ombudship builds on four primary objectives:

1. Educate and inform the public and public authorities
2. Contribute to program design to support fairness
3. Improve internal complaint handling processes
4. Assist public agencies to address gaps and deficiencies

The specific deliverables for the three-year pilot period include:

- Identify and work to resolve administrative fairness problems and improve processes with each of the 10 authorities that generate the largest volumes of complaints and with an additional 25 other public agencies deemed to represent the greatest opportunities for prevention.

- Issue best practices guides to promote fair practices in relation to topics that are applicable to multiple authorities or programs.
- Develop and deliver an on-line and in person administrative fairness training program, including a program oriented to employees new to the BC public service.
- Offer to and accept invitations to review proposed legislation, regulations and policy to assist legislators and policy-makers to address issues of administrative fairness before the public is impacted.
- Participate in reviews of program initiatives.
- Update, expand and reissue our guide on internal complaint handling processes and offer assistance in designing or improving specific complaint handling mechanisms.
- Host workshops for public authorities on the proper implementation of specific legislative provisions where there has been a history of problems with implementation.

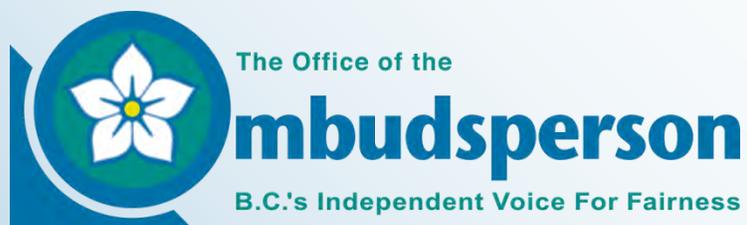
At the conclusion of the three-year pilot project we will evaluate the success and impact of our preventative work. Should our evaluation demonstrate a positive impact and provide evidence that there is a need for a permanent preventative program, we will propose a framework for the resourcing of this work on an ongoing basis.

2018/2019 AND 2019/2020 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

In years three and four of our Strategic Plan our focus will be on implementing and monitoring changes designed over the first two years and realizing our objectives of heightened awareness and accessibility, improved efficiency, and enhancing our systemic and preventative impact.

The preventative ombudship pilot project will be a major focus over this period as we look towards evaluating the need for a more permanent policy and funding framework for this work.

We also anticipate that reviews conducted in 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 will result in a number of initiatives to enhance our use of technology to improve efficiency at multiple levels of the organization, improve communications and knowledge management, increase public awareness, particularly among vulnerable and underserved communities and provide more accessible services to the public.



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