A large, stylized teal leaf graphic with a white outline, positioned on the left side of the page. It partially obscures a background image of a person walking on a sidewalk.

2020/21
-2022/23



SERVICE PLAN



The Office of the

mbudsperson

B.C.'s Independent Voice For Fairness

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Message from the Ombudsperson

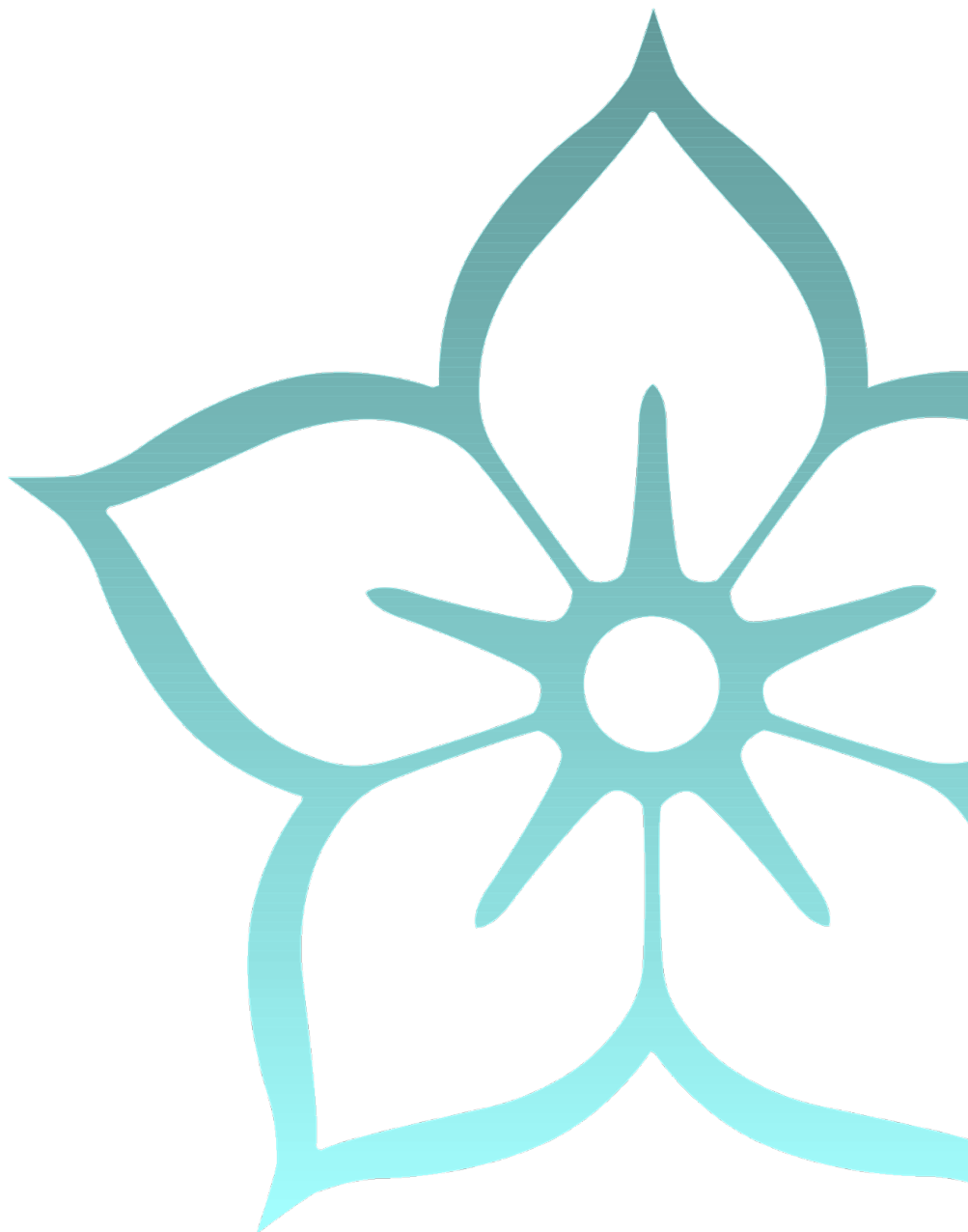
I have the honour to present the 2020/21-2022/2023 Service Plan for the Office of the Ombudsperson.

Included in this Service Plan is a report on our service performance for 2018/2019; an interim report on progress on 2019/2020 initiatives; and a plan setting out our key priorities and targets for 2020/2021 and beyond.

This Service Plan is the fourth plan issued within the strategic framework set out in our 2016-2021 Strategic Plan.



Jay Chalke
Ombudsperson



2016-2021 Strategic Plan: Summary

Our Vision, Mandate and Principles

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

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 enquiries 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

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 Strategic Plan: Summary

Our 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 Strategic Plan: Summary

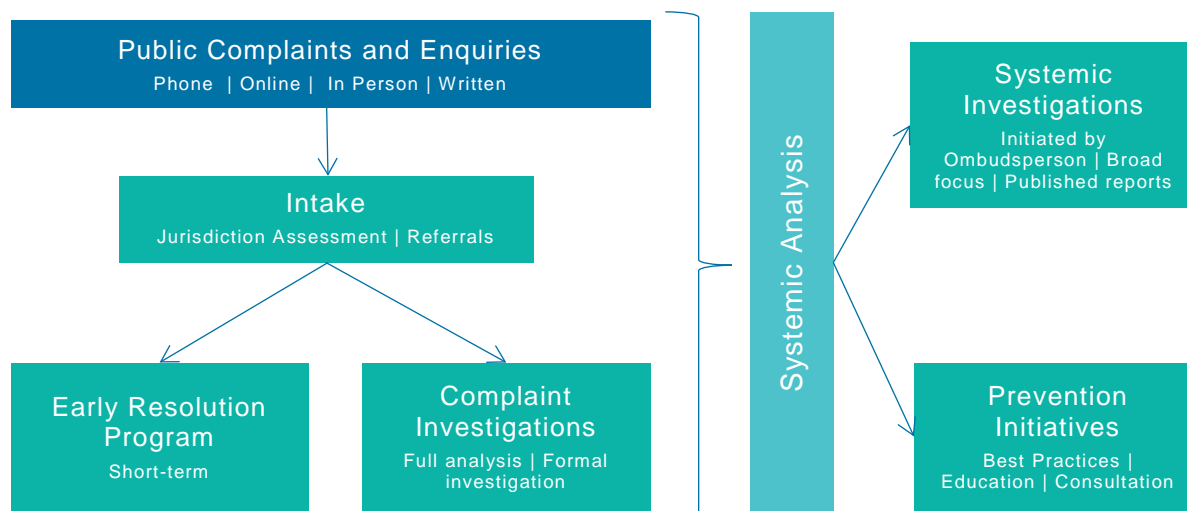
Our Strategies

- 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

Ombudsperson Act Operations

Our core operations are carried out through an integrated approach involving the processing of complaints and enquiries from the public at intake, the early resolution program, individual complaint investigations, systemic investigations and prevention initiatives.



Public Interest Disclosure Act Operations

BC's *Public Interest Disclosure Act* was passed in 2018 and assigns a number of new functions to the Ombudsperson including provision of advice to potential disclosers, investigations of disclosures and investigations of allegations of reprisal. The Ombudsperson has established an implementation team tasked with ensuring that our office is fully prepared to exercise these new functions when the Act is brought into force, anticipated for December 1, 2019.

Corporate Shared Services

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

2018/19 Performance Measures and Results

2016-2021 Strategic Goal	Performance Indicator	2018/19 Target	2018/19 Results
People who need us are aware of our services and can access them	# outreach tours conducted	2	2
	# of presentations to the public	20	22
Complaints are addressed efficiently	% of non-investigated files concluded within 30 days	90%	93%
	% of investigations concluded within 180 days	80%	71%
Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration	% of investigations settled	30%	29%
	# of investigative/best practices reports released	3	3
Public authorities are supported in improving administration	# presentations to authorities	30	45
Staff are recognized for their expertise	% of staff who report feeling supported in their work-related learning and development	75%	to be assessed in 2020/2021 through bi-annual Workplace Environment Survey
	# of requests from authorities and other organizations for training or assistance	20	31

2019/20 Interim Report on Performance

2019/20 is the fourth year of our five-year Strategic Plan. It represents another transitional year for the office, as we bring our three-year Prevention Initiatives pilot program to a conclusion and work towards continuing the program on a permanent basis (if funding is continued), and our office prepares to take on a brand new mandate when the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* comes into force later in the year.

The following summarizes our major accomplishments in 2019/20 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 public outreach tour and mobile complaint clinics in northeastern BC, including Prince George, Mackenzie, Chetwynd, Tumbler Ridge, Fort St. John and Dawson Creek.
- Continued outreach to underserved communities including Indigenous leadership and community organizations, youth-serving organizations and seniors organizations.

2. Complaints are addressed efficiently

- Eliminated backlog of new complaints being processed at Intake stage.
- Reduced backlog of processed complaints awaiting assignment to investigators by 20% since the end of the 2018/19 fiscal year.

3. Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration

- Completed major preparations for implementation of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*, including
 - Staffed our investigative team dedicated to PID matters.
 - Developed policies and procedures.
 - Established inter-agency protocols to facilitate referrals of disclosures between organizations.
 - Provided resources and education to public sector employees and senior leadership about their rights and responsibilities under the Act.
- Consulted with the Ministry of Attorney-General and the Public Service Agency on implementation of the legislative scheme across the public service and on plans for broader provincial and local public bodies.

4. Public authorities are supported in improving administration

- In the final pilot year of our Prevention Initiatives program, activities to date have included:
 - “Fairness in Practice” workshops continued around the province at full capacity and with an ongoing waitlist.

- 10 customized training sessions on administrative fairness delivered to specific authorities at their request.
- “Fairness 101” one-hour online training course released in June 2019, with 297 registrations to date.
- Released national “Fairness by Design” self-assessment guide for public bodies, developed in partnership with four other Canadian Ombuds offices.
- Completion of comprehensive program evaluation.
- Responding to enquiries and managing disclosures effectively and efficiently
- Continuing outreach and education to promote awareness of the Act and facilitate ethical organizational cultures in the public sector.
- Ongoing reduction of wait times and volume of files awaiting assignment for review by investigative staff.
- Planning for transition from pilot program to permanent implementation of Prevention Initiatives program if funding retained.

5. Staff are recognized for their expertise

- Ombudsperson staff have presented at various public administration conferences, including the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman and the United States Ombudsman Association on prevention initiatives, knowledge management, and separate confinement practices in youth custody.



Major areas of focus for the remainder of 2019/20 include:

- Commencement of operations under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* upon its coming into force later this fiscal year, including:
 - Training operational staff on legislation, policies and procedures.
- Expanding our targeted outreach to underserved communities to include newcomers to BC, LGBTQ2+ communities, and post-secondary students.
- As a result of new statutory responsibility under PIDA, release of redesigned public website, including:
 - Use of plain language and compliance with current accessibility standards.

- Development of new interactive “Complaint Checker” tool to assist members of the public in identifying ways to resolve their concerns directly with public authorities or identify appropriate review or appeal processes available before making a complaint to the Ombudsperson.
- Further implementation of recommendations from process reviews in Investigations, Intake and Early Resolution programs.
- Implementation of initiatives under our Knowledge Management Strategy, including office intranet redesign and long term tracking of significant public administration fairness issues within public bodies.

2020/21 Priorities and Initiatives

In the final year of our five-year Strategic Plan, the Office's operational priorities for 2020/21 are set out under their related goals below:

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

- Continued targeted outreach to underserved communities with additional focused areas to be determined.
- Establishment of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to promote outreach and relationships with aboriginal persons and groups (subject to funding).

2. Complaints are addressed efficiently

- Elimination of backlog of files awaiting assignment for review by investigative staff.

3. Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration

- Further implementation of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* including:
 - Continuing to respond to enquiries and manage disclosures, reprisal complaints and requests for assistance.
 - Continued outreach and education programs.
 - Engaging with staff from Ministry of Attorney General, Public Service Agency and Public Sector Employers Council

regarding anticipated expansion of application of *Public Interest Disclosure* to additional public bodies in 2020/21.

- Increase to Systemic Investigations capacity through reallocation on an as-available basis of temporary PID investigator complement (subject to funding).

4. Public authorities are supported in improving administration

- Continuation of Prevention Initiatives program on a permanent basis and development of long-term planning for the program (subject to funding).

5. Staff are recognized for their expertise

- Development of an outcome-based approach to performance measurement and expanded data collection and reporting on service delivery and performance (subject to funding).
- Continued implementation of initiatives under our Knowledge Management Strategy, including a framework for monitoring and analysis of media issues and legislative changes and development of an ongoing program for tracking of cross-jurisdictional knowledge and best practice in ombuds work and public sector oversight.

In addition to the matters linked to our five Strategic Plan goals, two other major priorities for 2020/21 are:

- Development of the Ombudsperson's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan.
- Continued implementation of *Public Interest Disclosure Act*.

Performance Measurement

In our previous Service Plan covering 2019/20-2020/21, we set out to establish an improved performance measurement framework that would be more meaningful, informative and outcome-focused.

As we discussed in more detail in last year's Service Plan, measuring the impact of ombuds work has been a daunting and elusive goal not just for our organization but for other ombuds around the world over many years. Much has been written and studied on the subject, but this has not yet led to the development of leading and sustainable approaches that truly inform ombuds and their stakeholders as to the impact organizations like ours have on the administration of government programs and the populations they serve. It remains difficult to objectively report on how effective ombuds are in their work beyond simple quantitative metrics focused on outputs and timeliness.

Despite the challenge involved, we have set out to do better than we have in the past. In order to accomplish this we obtained strategic advice from an expert in the field of public sector performance measurement, who conducted a broad review of frameworks used by ombuds and other relevant organizations across Canada and in international jurisdictions, a review of relevant literature, and consultation with various offices with similar mandates and our stakeholders.

We received the report from that review in Spring 2019. The report outlines a number of proposals that offer promise, but require significant work to

implement. These approaches include the collection of extensive survey data through various stakeholder groups, detailed analysis of our complaint and investigation files, and extending our follow up on completed files beyond what we have had the capacity for in the past.

One of the clear messages from this review is that a move to more qualitative and outcome-based performance measurement and reporting will not be feasible or sustainable without the investment of dedicated resources.

In light of the complexity and cost involved in the proposed approaches, we recognize that it will take some time to consider, trial and evaluate potential new approaches and develop a comprehensive performance measurement framework that can demonstrate clear value for reporting on and improving the effectiveness of our work.

At the same time, the phased implementation of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* beginning in this fiscal year, and the potential establishment of a permanent framework for our Prevention Initiatives program, will have a significant impact on our office's overall goals and performance, and the approaches necessary to assess them. The recent third-party evaluation of the Prevention Initiatives pilot has provided a good basis for development of relevance performance measures for that program. It will take further direct experience with these programs, particularly Public Interest Disclosure, to determine appropriate performance measures and objectives.

Given that the 2020/21 fiscal year represents the final year of our current

Strategic Plan, and that we have already established performance measures and targets for 2020/21 in our previous Service Plan, the logical course of action is to review, pilot and evaluate potential new approaches and develop revised performance measures and goals for all of our program areas in conjunction with the development of new goals, objectives and strategies for our 2021-2026 Strategic Plan.

To accomplish these tasks in 2020/21 we have reallocated resources dedicated to evaluation, a similar purpose to performance measurement development. This will allow us to trial and evaluate new approaches to performance measurement and analysis over the remainder of the current fiscal year and throughout our upcoming strategic planning year in 2020/21.

Our objective in 2020/21 will be to report on a tentative framework in our next Service Plan outlining fully the resource investments required to implement the framework. Specific measures and targets for the 2021/22 fiscal year and beyond will be included in a complete framework as part of our 2021-2026 Strategic Plan which will be released by the end of March 2021.

2019/20 - 2020/21 Performance Measures Matrix		
2016-2021 Strategic Goal	Performance Indicator	2020/21 Target
People who need us are aware of our services and can access them	# of outreach tours conducted	2
	# of presentations to the public	30
Complaints are addressed efficiently	% of non-investigated files concluded within 30 days	90%
	% of investigations concluded within 180 days	80%
Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration	% of investigations settled	30%
	# of investigative/best practices reports released	3
Public authorities are supported in improving administration	# of presentations to authorities	50
Staff are recognized for their expertise	% of staff who report feeling supported in their work-related learning and development	90% - to be assessed in 2020/2021 in conjunction with bi-annual Workplace Environment Survey
	# of requests from authorities and other organizations for training or assistance	35

2021/22 and 2022/23 Strategic Direction

2021/22 will be our first year following the conclusion of our 2016-2021 Strategic Plan.

As a result, specific goals, objectives and performance indicators for 2021/22 and beyond will be determined following extensive consultation with our staff and stakeholders in conjunction with the development of 2021-2026 Strategic Plan.

Anticipated priorities for 2021/22 and beyond include:

- the further implementation of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* as its application is expanded to include additional public bodies,
- capitalizing on new technologies in conjunction with the planned replacement of our current case tracking database system, and
- a renewed focus on qualitative and outcome-driven performance measurement.

MAILING ADDRESS:

Office of the Ombudsperson
PO Box 9039 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9A5

TELEPHONE:

General Enquiries Victoria: 250.387.5855

Toll Free: 1.800.567.3247

IN PERSON:

Second Floor • 947 Fort Street • Victoria BC

FAX:

250.387.0198

WEBSITE:

www.bcombudsperson.ca