

SERVICE PLAN

Fiscal Years 2016/2017 - 2018/2019



Office of the Ombudsperson

Presented to the

**Select Standing Committee on
Finance and Government Services**
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Message from the Ombudsperson

This Service Plan focuses on timely and effective delivery of services and meeting key performance measures. It focuses on immediate measures to address ongoing service delays and short run impacts while developing a renewed strategic plan for the longer term. It builds on the successes outlined in previous Ombudsperson Annual Reports, most notably the 2014/2015 Annual Report.

The last 18 months have been a time of continued change for the Office of the Ombudsperson. There have been three major changes in this period:

- The departure of several senior managers and other staff to retirement and new opportunities led in turn to a restructuring of our senior management team and the assumption of new roles by both experienced and new members of our staff.
- The previous Ombudsperson, Kim Carter, retired in June of this year after nine years of outstanding service to the people of British Columbia.
- A major investigation was referred to the Ombudsperson by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in July 2015. This was the first referral under section 10(3) of the *Ombudsperson Act* in the 36 year history of the office.

While these changes have offered opportunities for renewal and growth as an organization, they have also challenged our ability to retain organizational knowledge and expertise and slowed the office's ability to achieve progress on some goals, priorities and initiatives. 2014/2015 remained, however, a productive and successful year for the office. Our office celebrated its 35th anniversary, marked by the Proclamation of November 24-28, 2014 as "Fairness Week" in British Columbia. The number of inquiries and complaints received increased for the second straight year to 7,818 reflecting the value British Columbians put on our office as a trusted resource.

The first half of 2015/2016 has seen increases in volume; we are on pace for higher rates of both complaints received and complaint files closed than in any of the preceding 5 years. This volume has, however, also presented a challenge as, despite an increased rate of closure, our list of files awaiting assignment continues to grow, resulting in longer wait periods for many complaints to be assigned to Ombudsperson Officers for investigation.

The office issued one systemic report in 2014/2015. *In the Public Interest* focused on challenges arising in the oversight and regulation of private career training institutions by the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Private Career Training Institutions Agency. The report's 31 findings and 36 recommendations point the way towards a model of governance that protects the public by providing consistent and effective monitoring and enforcement of standards while ensuring that students have clear and accessible information, adequate input, and access to a fair complaints process. Since the beginning of our investigation the ministry has dissolved the PCTIA board and passed new legislation to replace the existing framework, but has yet to introduce draft regulations, bring the new legislation into force, or formally accept any of our report's recommendations.

At the same time our prior systemic reports into environmental oversight, local government administration, income and disability assistance, adult guardianship and home and community care for seniors generate ongoing interest and positive outcomes. Our systemic investigations team continues to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations in *Striking a Balance, Time Matters, No Longer Your Decision* and *The Best of Care*. Currently our systemic investigations team is concluding work on a best practices guide for local governments on bylaw enforcement.

We have continued to conduct outreach around the province. In 2014/2015 tours were completed in the North Island and Kootenay regions, during which we engaged with local community groups and opened an Ombudsperson Office for the day to enhance awareness and accessibility of our services. In 2015, Ombudsperson Kim Carter conducted a series of meetings and presentations with local government councils and boards around the province to enhance awareness of our office's role and educate the public and local government officials alike on key principles of fair and accountable governance. Recently, Ombudsperson staff delivered a clinic on bylaw enforcement best practices at the UBCM annual convention.

Our office's expertise and leadership has continued to be recognized in the broader Ombuds community. In May 2015 our staff conducted a workshop on Systemic Investigations at the bi-annual Forum of Canadian Ombudsman Conference in Vancouver and in September 2014 joined the faculty for Osgoode Hall's Essentials for Ombuds certificate program.

2015/2016 represents a transition year for the office. Our last strategic plan covered the period from 2010 to 2014. We are just commencing the process to develop a new multi-year plan for the office that will be developed with input from stakeholders, public authorities, staff and legislators. At the same time, many of our staff are assuming new temporary roles in order to conduct the investigation referred on July 29, 2015 by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. Our office is focused on ensuring that we are using our resources efficiently to ensure a timely, thorough and independent investigation in accordance with the Committee's directions but also to continue our everyday service responding effectively to complaints and inquiries from the public, and minimizing disruption and delay as we complete our transition back to our usual business by the end of 2016/2017.

As we look back to celebrate our success and forward to position our organization to face the future, we will focus on the present to ensure that we fulfill our vital role in protecting the right of British Columbians to fair and reasonable treatment, effective public administration and good governance in British Columbia.



Jay Chalke
Ombudsperson
Province of British Columbia

Vision, Mandate and Guiding Principles

Legislative Framework

Ombudsperson Act

Vision

British Columbia's Independent Voice for Fairness

Mandate

To ensure that every person in British Columbia 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.

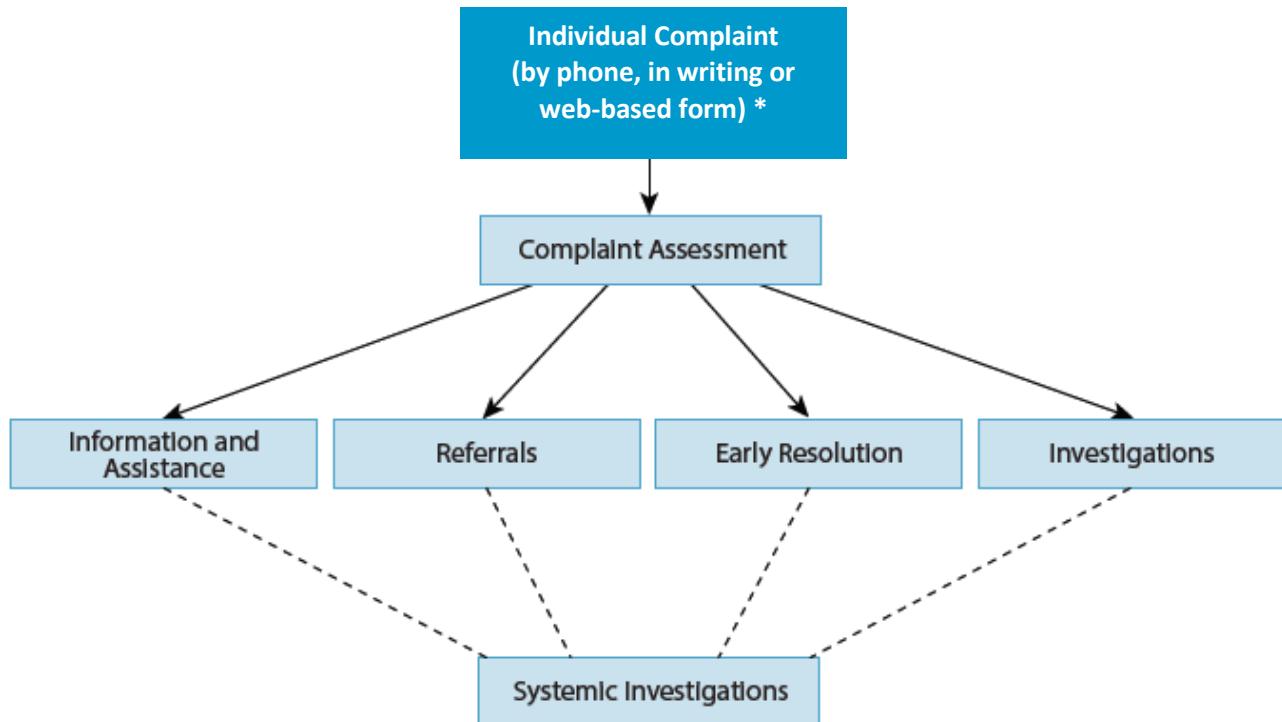
Guiding Principles

Continuous Improvement, Equality, High Quality Service, Integrity, Leadership, Respect, Teamwork, Trusting Environment

How We Do Our Work

Office of the Ombudsperson Core Operational Activities

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



- * Investigations can also be initiated by the Ombudsperson or where a matter is referred by the Legislative Assembly or one of its committees.
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Office of the Ombudsperson Corporate Shared Service Activities

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

Service Plan Structure

As set out in the most recent Strategic Plan, the Office of the Ombudsperson strategic goals are:

- Enhancing Understanding of the Principles of Good Governance
- Ensuring Administrative Fairness
- Providing Quality Service
- Supporting a Workplace of Excellence

We have identified key success factors that demonstrate the office is making progress towards those goals. Those key success factors are:

- Increased public and stakeholder awareness and understanding of administrative fairness
- Thorough and timely investigations
- Improved administrative fairness through focused, relevant recommendations and changes in actions, practices, policies and procedures
- Maintaining a healthy workplace environment

Those success factors have resulted in specific performance indicators and measures.

Included in this Service Plan is our performance measurement results for 2014/2015; an interim report on progress on 2015/2016 initiatives; and our approach to planning for 2016/2017 and beyond.

2014/2015 Performance Measures and Results

Performance Measures Matrix				
Strategic Goal	Outcome	Key Performance Indicator	2014/15 Target	2014/15 Results
Enhance Understanding of Principles of Good Governance	Increased public and stakeholder awareness of administrative fairness and role of the Ombudsperson Office	% increase in website use	10%	1%
		Deliver presentations on administrative fairness	30	60
		Conduct outreach tours	1	2
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 recommendations made in systemic reports	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%	75%
Support a Workplace of Excellence	Highly skilled staff	Completion of 2015-2019 Strategic Plan	Completion	Deferred
		% of staff who receive professional training	90%	90%

2015/2016 Interim Report on Strategic Goals

This reflects progress to date on 2015/2016 goals, priorities and initiatives.

1. *Enhance Understanding of Principles of Good Governance*

- The Ombudsperson conducted outreach presentations to a number of local government boards and councils.
- The office has rebuilt its public website to increase access and enhance information provided to the public.

2. *Ensure Administrative Fairness*

- The office issued Public Report No. 51, *In the Public Interest: Protecting Students Through Effective Oversight of Private Career Training Institutions*.
- There has been 100% reporting on the status of implementation of recommendations in prior systemic reports.

3. *Provide Quality Service*

- The office replaced our previous switchboard technology with a new call centre system to improve our ability to handle incoming calls and to quickly address issues with our responsiveness.
- The office updated the online complaint form and added new inquiry forms to the website to improve public accessibility and timely service.
- The office assisted various public agencies to improve the fairness of their processes.

4. *Support a Workplace of Excellence*

- 91% of the office's operational staff received professional training early in the fiscal year.
- The office has revised internal policy to increase opportunities for staff to act in supervisory roles.

The major areas of focus for the remainder of 2015/2016 include developing a strategy to reduce the number of files awaiting assignment and developing the 2016/2017-2020/2021 Strategic Plan.

2016/2017 Priorities and Initiatives

The Office of the Ombudsperson is in a period of transition, and will determine specific goals, objectives, and performance indicators for 2016/2017 and beyond through a consultative strategic planning process that will be a key focus for the office during the remainder of 2015/2016.

While the full suite of 2016/2017 priorities will be determined in the 2016/17-2020/2021 Strategic Plan, based on current challenges and the need to maintain current programs and service levels our office has identified the following ongoing priorities for 2016/2017:

- Conduct a timely and thorough investigation of matters referred by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
- Manage the impact on the files awaiting assignment list arising from the reallocation of investigative staff to the referral investigation by securing temporary resources during the referral investigation and a subsequent period of transition back to the regular service model
- Maintain a high level of responsiveness at initial contact
- Investigate individual complaints and influence appropriate outcomes
- Continue public education and outreach activities
- Effectively monitor and report on systemic outcomes and recommendations
- Continue ongoing professional training for all staff

2017/2018 and 2018/2019 Strategic Direction

The office will determine specific goals, objectives, and performance indicators for future years through development of its 2016/2017-2020/2021 Strategic Plan in the latter part of 2015/2016. Anticipated strategic direction includes increasing the effective use of technology; providing the most effective and timely resolutions to individual complaints; increasing public and stakeholder engagement; and developing an effective advisory and preventative Ombudship program.