

2021/22 • 2023/24
**SERVICE
PLAN**



OMBUDSPERSON
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Table of Contents

2016-2021 Strategic Plan: Summary	4
Our Vision, Mandate and Principles	4
2016-2021 Strategic Plan: Summary	5
Our Goals and Objectives	5
2016-2021 Strategic Plan: Summary	6
Our Strategies	6
How We Do Our Work	7
Ombudsperson Act Operations	7
Public Interest Disclosure Act Operations	7
Corporate Shared Services	7
2019/20 Performance Measures and Results	8
2020/21 Interim Report on Performance	9
Pandemic Impacts	9
Strategic Planning	10
Indigenous Reconciliation	10
Other Planned Initiatives	10
2020/21 Performance Measures and Results (in progress)	12
2021/22 Priorities and Initiatives	13
Performance Measurement	14
2022/23 and 2023/24 Strategic Direction	15

Message from the Ombudsperson

I have the honour to present the 2021/22-2023/2024 Service Plan for the Office of the Ombudsperson.

Included in this Service Plan is a report on our service performance for 2019/2020; an interim report on progress on 2020/2021 initiatives; and a plan setting out our key priorities and targets for 2021/2022 and beyond.

This Service Plan is the fifth and final plan issued within the strategic framework set out in our 2016-2021 Strategic Plan, and bridges between that plan and our 2021-2026 Strategic Plan currently in development.



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
- 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 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

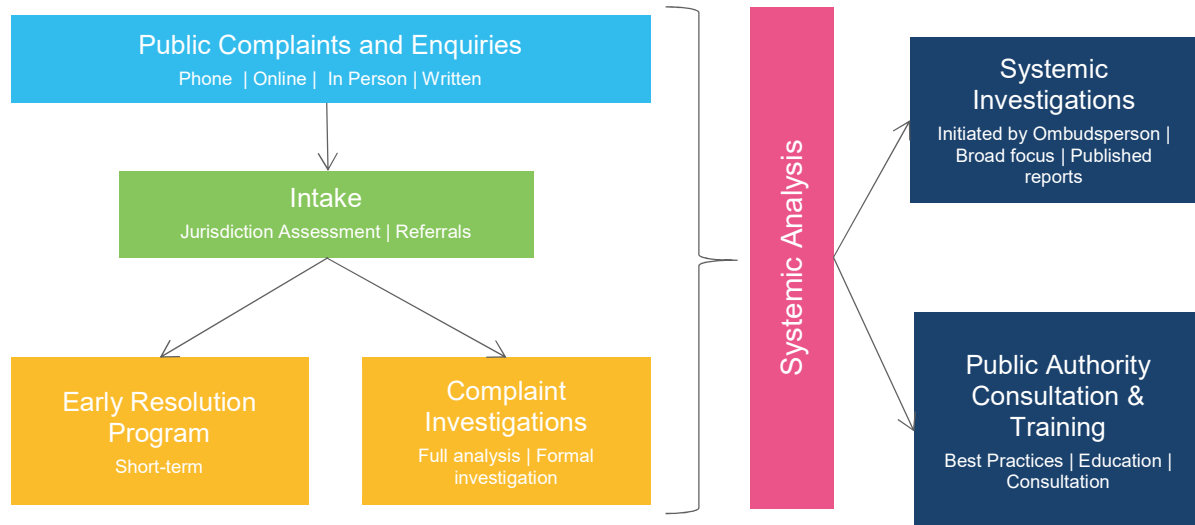
Our Strategies

- 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 operations under the *Ombudsperson Act* 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 brought into force on December 1, 2019 and assigned 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 *Public Interest Disclosure Act* currently applies to BC government ministries and the independent offices of the legislature, with additional government bodies to be added to the scope of the Act in future years.

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.

2019/20 Performance Measures and Results

2016-2021 Strategic Goal	Performance Indicator	2019/20 Target	2019/20 Results
People who need us are aware of our services and can access them	# of outreach tours conducted	2	2
	# of presentations to the public	30	27
Complaints are addressed efficiently	% of non-investigated files concluded within 30 days	90%	90%
	% of investigations concluded within 180 days	80%	66%
Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration	% of investigations settled	30%	31%
	# of investigative/best practices reports released	3	1
Public authorities are supported in improving administration	# presentations to authorities	50	37
Staff are recognized for their expertise	% of staff who report feeling supported in their work-related learning and development	90%	91%
	# of requests from authorities and other organizations for training or assistance	35	50

2020/21 Interim Report on Performance

2020/21 is the fifth and final year of our 2016-2021 Strategic Plan, and as a result we are actively developing our next Strategic Plan. It also represents our first full year of operation since the implementation of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*, and our first full year of operation with permanent funding for our Prevention Initiatives program – now retitled as our Public Authority Consultation and Training (PACT) program.

It has also been a uniquely challenging year due to the unanticipated and unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and provincial state of emergency on our organization and on the government programs and services we are mandated to oversee.

Our report this year will therefore focus somewhat less on our longer term initiatives and core mandate than usual as we must also focus on impacts and adjustments that have been driven by the pandemic.

Pandemic Impacts

The impacts of the pandemic have been felt in our work in three main areas:

1. Understanding changed government services

- Our teams had to adapt to deal with the rapid volume of emergency orders, new legislation and initiatives, and changes to service delivery across all government services. Our knowledge management program adapted significantly to focus on tracking these changes and making that information quickly and readily available to staff.

- We established an internal pandemic committee to regularly review changes in government services and programs, concerns raised by media, and complaint trends relating to the pandemic to prioritize key pandemic-related issues, ensure our staff were informed of new issues being raised or systemic areas of concern, and minimize overlap across teams in their work.
- We recognized the significant impact the pandemic would have on resourcing across government, and established new procedures to ensure that we were mindful of the impacts of our investigations on the operations of public authorities, minimize any unnecessary negative impact to public service delivery and support expedited resolutions on pandemic-related matters.

2. Communicating with the public

- We established a pandemic outreach strategy, adapting our outreach focus to online advertising and social media and targeting our most vulnerable and most impacted communities. This has included, for example, outreach to all poverty law advocates and domestic violence services providers across the province.
- During the pandemic our physical offices in Victoria have remained closed to the public.
- We suspended our regular outreach tours to different areas of the province, limiting our in-person ability to promote awareness, meet

with community groups and service providers, and provide in-person intake services.

3. Adapting to remote work

- Nearly all staff were transitioned to remote work arrangements in March and April 2020 and continue to work from home.
- This presented major logistical challenges during the early weeks of the pandemic as our information technology infrastructure did not have the existing capacity for this sudden change. Our systems team and staff worked to promptly secure the necessary technology and licensing.

Strategic Planning

- Our planning process kicked off in September 2020 and to date we have consulted with public community stakeholders, public authorities, members of the public and our staff to assess our successes, challenges and opportunities over the past five years.
- Our 2021-2026 Strategic Plan will be complete by March 31, 2021.

Indigenous Reconciliation

- With the support of the new Indigenous Liaison Officer position, our office has begun a process of dialogue with Indigenous communities and stakeholders as we work towards the development of an Indigenous Communities Services Plan that will support Reconciliation and identify how our office can serve indigenous people more effectively.

Other Planned Initiatives

The following summarizes our major accomplishments in 2020/21 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

- We released a redesigned website in April 2020, featuring a new webform that allows complainants to upload evidence directly with their complaint, and a Complaint Checker interface to provide complainants with up front information about government programs within and outside our jurisdiction, and avenues they can pursue to address concerns before making a formal complaint.
- In conjunction with our strategic planning process we conducted a public survey focusing on awareness and understanding of our role and public expectations for our services.

2. Complaints are addressed efficiently

- Following initial challenges during the early months of the pandemic, achieved in October 2020 the goal of eliminating the backlog of complaints that have been processed through our Intake Team and are awaiting assignment to investigators.

3. Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration

- Released two systemic investigation reports:
 - Special Report No. 44, *Extraordinary Times, Extraordinary Measures: Two*

ministerial orders made under the Emergency Program Act in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

- Special Report No. 45, *Course Correction: The Ministry of Education 2019 Provincial Exam Errors*

- Completed first full calendar year of operations under the new *Public Interest Disclosure Act* mandate, including:

- Processing disclosures and reports and conducting investigations into allegations of wrongdoing;
- Continued planning and discussion with the Ministry of Attorney General on the future phased rollout of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* to the broader public sector; and
- Providing consultation and education services to public bodies in support of the public service implementation of the Act.

4. Public authorities are supported in improving administration

- Released Special Report No. 46, *Complaint Handling Guide: Setting*

up Effective Complaint Resolution Systems in Public Organizations, a best practices guide for the public sector and delivered an associated webinar to roughly 500 public servants.

5. Staff are recognized for their expertise

- Throughout the pandemic, the Ombudsperson and staff have engaged with colleague organizations across Canada and internationally to share information about how the pandemic has impacted government operations and services and the role of oversight during a global pandemic, and sharing adaptive strategies and approaches to ensure the continuity of robust public oversight.

.....

Major areas of focus for the remainder of 2020/21 include:

- Completion of the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan
- Development of a long term policy framework to address continued flexible work arrangements for our staff beyond the pandemic period.

2020/21 Performance Measures and Results (in progress)

April 1 to December 31, 2020

2016-2021 Strategic Goal	Performance Indicator	2020/21 Target	2020/21 Interim Results
People who need us are aware of our services and can access them	# of outreach tours conducted	2	0
	# of presentations to the public	30	9
Complaints are addressed efficiently	% of non-investigated files concluded within 30 days	90%	92%
	% of investigations concluded within 180 days	80%	57%
Thorough and impartial investigations promote fair public administration	% of investigations settled	30%	37%
	# of investigative/best practices reports released	3	3
Public authorities are supported in improving administration	# presentations to authorities	50	13
Staff are recognized for their expertise	% of staff who report feeling supported in their work-related learning and development	90%	n/a (assessed biannually in Workplace Environment Survey)
	# of requests from authorities and other organizations for training or assistance	35	26

2021/22 Priorities and Initiatives

As 2021/22 will be the first year under our 2021-2026 Strategic Plan currently in development, we look forward to sharing a more detailed look at the next five years through that report at the end of the current fiscal year.

Regardless of the outcome of our long term planning, we know that 2021/22 will be significantly impacted by the replacement of our 28 year old current case tracking system. This process was necessitated by the end-of-life phase of the Oracle platform of our current system, and a successful procurement process in 2020/21 has set the stage for an exciting opportunity to review and refine our current business processes and workflows, enhance the reliability and consistency of our data and complaint information, and conduct more rigorous data analysis and reporting. This process will ask a great deal of our staff and resources, however, and it will take care and planning to ensure that we continue to sustain our impact and our services to the public while the new system is implemented and our staff are retrained.

Our office will be transformed in other ways next year with the completion of our Indigenous Communities Services Plan in 2021/22. With all areas of our organization engaged in these discussions, we look forward to developing our capacity, humility, and awareness of our teams develop as we implement new ideas and ways of thinking and knowing, and work within new relationships and partnerships with indigenous people and communities.

We also look ahead to a transition from the changes to our work necessitated by the pandemic to the resumption of more regular business. Like other public sector organizations, we anticipate that this will not be a simple return to business as usual, but the development of a new normal. Our staff and our organization have adapted to new technologies and new ways of working, and we hope to leverage this learning to better support our staff, utilize physical space more efficiently, and attract and retain diverse talent through more flexible work arrangements. In so doing, we expect to enhance our effectiveness in oversight and in our use of resources. In addition, we anticipate that public bodies across the province will modify their post-pandemic work processes which will create new oversight challenges.

We also continue to work with government on the ongoing phased rollout of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* to the broader public sector, and have been advised we can anticipate further expansion of that Act's scope which will have workload impacts on us in 2021/22.

Finally, we anticipate changes to our complaint profile arising from the changes to motor vehicle insurance as British Columbia moves on May 1, 2021 from a tort system of compensation to the Enhanced Care model. This change will bring matters under our jurisdiction that under the tort system were outside our jurisdiction.

Performance Measurement

A revised framework for our reporting to the Select Standing Committee will form part of our new 2021-2026 Strategic Plan still in development. In addition to our current reporting on the timeliness of our services and our outputs. Our revised framework will likely include reporting on public feedback on awareness of our services and our service quality and enhanced reporting on outcomes of our complaint investigations.

To ensure continuity of our reporting and accountability to the legislature and the public, our Service Plan reporting on performance for the 2021/22 fiscal year will include all of the existing measures currently in place for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 fiscal years.

2022/23 and 2023/24 Strategic Direction

Specific goals, objectives and performance indicators for 2022/23 and beyond will be set out in our 2021-2026 Strategic Plan currently under development.

MAIL:

PO Box 9039 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9A5

TELEPHONE:

Victoria: 250.387.5855
Toll-free: 1.800.567.3247
Fax: 250.387.0198

EMAIL:

info@bcombudsperson.ca



OMBUDSPERSON
BRITISH COLUMBIA