LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ombudsperson
Job Description

Position Overview

The Ombudsperson is an officer of the Legislature appointed as set out in the *Ombudsperson Act*. As a non-partisan officer of the Legislature, the Ombudsperson is independent from the executive branch of government, and reports to and is accountable to the Legislative Assembly.

The Ombudsperson is responsible for investigating and upholding the administrative fairness of programs and services provided by provincial and local public sector organizations, pursuant to the *Ombudsperson Act*, and investigating allegations of wrongdoing or complaints of reprisal made by current or former employees of public sector organizations subject to the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*.

Appointment Term and Process

Section 2 of the *Ombudsperson Act* provides that the Lieutenant Governor must appoint as Ombudsperson an individual who has been recommended by the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly may only recommend an individual who has been unanimously recommended by a special committee of the Legislative Assembly (the "Special Committee"). The Ombudsperson is appointed for a term of six years and may be reappointed, in the same manner, for an additional term or terms.

Location

The Office of the Ombudsperson (the "Office") is located in Victoria, British Columbia. The Ombudsperson is expected to reside in the Greater Victoria region.

Compensation and Benefits

Pursuant to section 4 of the *Ombudsperson Act*, the Ombudsperson is to be paid a salary equal to the salary paid to the chief judge of the Provincial Court of British Columbia. For the 2025-26 fiscal year, the salary is $413,683.

The Ombudsperson is reimbursed for travel and other expenses incurred in performing the duties of the position. The Ombudsperson is also eligible for enrolment in the Public Service Pension Plan, in accordance with the terms and conditions of that plan, with each year of eligible service counted as 1.5 years of pensionable service. The detailed terms and conditions of appointment and the associated benefits are specified in the letter of offer provided to the recommended candidate by the Special Committee.

Accountability to the Legislative Assembly and Statutory Reporting Requirements

As an officer of the Legislature (also referred to as a statutory officer), the Ombudsperson is accountable and reports to the Legislative Assembly through both the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and through any designated parliamentary committees.

The Legislative Assembly has delegated general oversight of statutory officers and their respective offices to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. The oversight delegated to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services includes considering and making recommendations regarding annual reports, service plans, office budgets, and any other matters that may arise respecting the effective and efficient administration of the Office. Such delegated oversight may be adjusted from time to time by resolution of the Legislative Assembly.

Section 31 of the *Ombudsperson Act* requires that the Ombudsperson report annually to the Speaker on the affairs of the Office and authorizes the Ombudsperson to make special reports to the Legislative Assembly on any matter the Ombudsperson considers to be in the public interest or in the interest of a person or public sector organization. In addition, if the Ombudsperson requests a public sector organization take steps to address a recommendation following an investigation and no suitable action is taken within a reasonable time, section 25 of the *Ombudsperson Act* authorizes the Ombudsperson to issue a report of the matter, first to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and then to the Legislative Assembly.

Section 40 of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* requires that the Ombudsperson report annually to the Speaker on the exercise and performance of their functions and duties under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*.

Statutory Powers, Duties, and Responsibilities

The Ombudsperson carries out the powers, duties, and responsibilities set out in the *Ombudsperson Act* and the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*, including but not limited to:

- conducting investigations into administrative matters, in response to a complaint, at their own initiative, or when referred by the Legislative Assembly or one of its committees;
- investigating allegations of wrongdoing from current and former public sector employees, and complaints from employees who believe they have experienced reprisal for exercising their rights under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*;
- making recommendations on the resolution of substantiated complaints and monitoring and reporting on the steps taken by public sector organizations to comply with the Ombudsperson's recommendation(s); and
- providing advice to employees and public bodies about their rights and responsibilities under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*.

Financial and Human Resources Management

The Ombudsperson is accountable for the effective and efficient administration of the Office. As the head of the Office, the Ombudsperson has managerial authority over staff, which currently consists of approximately 121.5 full-time equivalent positions. The Office's operating budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year is $16,456,250.

In addition to reporting annually to the Speaker, the Ombudsperson is expected to issue multi-year strategic plans for the Office, that include goals and performance measures for consideration by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services on an annual basis. The Ombudsperson is also expected to provide accurate and fiscally responsible budget proposals, forecasts, and reporting in alignment with the expectations set by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services.

The Ombudsperson is expected to ensure that the Office has policies and procedures in place to ensure the responsible management of financial and human resources, including standards of conduct and respectful workplace policies applicable to the Office's staff.

Qualifications

Education and Experience

- A post-secondary qualification in a relevant field of study, such as law or public administration
- Experience conducting sensitive investigations in a thorough, impartial, and fair manner and recommending remedies and solutions
- Experience analyzing and upholding principles of administrative fairness, procedural fairness, and natural justice
- Experience leading conflict resolution processes
- Experience analyzing, interpreting, and applying legal principles and statutory provisions
- Experience in financial, human resources, and organizational management in a senior capacity
- Experience communicating with the public, media, and senior officials
- Experience working with and meeting the needs of diverse communities, including Indigenous Peoples
- Experience building and maintaining an organizational culture focused on transparency, accountability, and inclusivity

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Knowledge

- Knowledge of administrative law, the principles of administrative and procedural fairness, and approaches to conflict resolution
- Knowledge of the context within which the Ombudsperson operates, including the Legislative Assembly and its parliamentary committees, the Executive Council, the public sector, and external stakeholders

Leadership

- Strong leadership skills, including the ability to manage, motivate, and develop strong relationships with staff, based on trust, respect, effective communication, and common goals
- Ability to build and maintain a respectful and inclusive workplace culture
- Ability to demonstrate strategic thinking and long-term vision to set and achieve organizational goals and lead organizational change

Organizational Management

- Organizational management skills including managing assets effectively and preparing organizational budgets while exercising discretion in spending matters
- Ability to promote public accountability and transparency in the work of the Office
- Ability to improve organizational performance by identifying, promoting, or introducing previously unknown or untried procedures

Communication and Relationship-Building

- Demonstrated collaboration and interpersonal skills with the ability to communicate clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing

- Ability to articulate the importance of administrative fairness in public services and whistleblower protections for public sector employees, and to explain the substance of and rationale behind decisions and recommendations made pursuant to applicable legislation
- Highly developed media relations and issues management skills
- Ability to build effective relationships with Members, parliamentary committees, government, and external stakeholders
- Ability to interact effectively and respectfully with Indigenous peoples, as well as communities and individuals from diverse backgrounds

Analysis and Judgement

- Ability to exercise judgement in determining what investigations or disclosures to pursue and in navigating high-profile and contentious investigations
- Ability to propose or recommend systemic changes as a result of systemic investigations or disclosures
- Strong problem-solving aptitude and ability to conceptualize new strategies and approaches to addressing complex issues and organizational needs
- Ability to make sound and impartial decisions in routine, sensitive, and/or public matters
- Ability to consistently apply legislative and regulatory requirements to specific circumstances

Personal Suitability

- Demonstrated record of non-partisanship
- High degree of integrity and strong personal and professional ethics
- Commitment to the values of impartiality, fairness, transparency, and accountability
- Respected in chosen career and in the community at large

Personal Conduct

The Ombudsperson is expected to uphold their oath of office, abide by all policies of the Office, and create, foster, and maintain a safe and positive work environment for all staff. This includes modelling respectful and professional conduct expected of a senior public officeholder.

The appointment of the Ombudsperson will be subject to the successful completion of a criminal record check.