



Office of the
Merit Commissioner

Budget Submission

Fiscal Years

2014/15 – 2016/17

Presented to
The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

December 5, 2013



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Overview

This budget submission for the Office of the Merit Commissioner is accompanied by the Service Plan for 2014/15 to 2016/17 which describes the broad direction for the Office over the same three-year time horizon. This budget request to the Committee, mindful that government delivers services from a limited public purse, is for a minor increase in the amount of \$10,000 to cover mandatory and non-discretionary increases to employee salaries and benefits, as well as increased building occupancy costs.

Last fiscal year, the Office managed the budget allocation effectively to fulfill its mandate and deliver on commitments as outlined to the Committee in our Service Plan. To carry out this work the Office employs four permanent staff, engages four external auditors on a contract basis, and consults as appropriate with an external Audit Advisory Committee. The Merit Commissioner continues to serve as a part-time appointee.

In past fiscal years, the Office of the Merit Commissioner absorbed most of the costs associated with increases to employee salaries and benefits. A minor budgetary amendment is now proposed due to the non-discretionary nature of these increased costs and in the interest of maintaining funds sufficient and necessary to allow the Office to fulfill its mandate: the oversight of merit-based hiring in the BC Public Service, the prompt and appropriate response to requests from employees for reviews of appointment decisions, and the communication of the value of merit and its impact on employee engagement and productivity.

Mandate

The Merit Commissioner's Office provides independent oversight and insight into merit-based hiring in the BC Public Service.

All appointments to and from within the public service must be made on the principle of merit. Merit means that appointments are made on the basis of an assessment of competence and ability to do the job, and are not influenced by patronage. To carry out this mandate we focus on our core services: annual and special audits; independent staffing reviews; and education about the requirements of merit-based staffing.

The Office provides credible and relevant information about staffing on which the employer will act to produce positive changes. These outputs all support the long-term goal of building public confidence and a strong consensus that the public service is qualified, and hired fairly according to the principle of merit.



Priorities for Fiscal 2014/15

The Service Plan provides details that support each of the following priorities.

- Conduct a Merit Performance Audit designed to examine appointments made to and within the BC Public Service, report results to the BC Public Service Agency and organization heads, and formulate recommendations for improvement.
- Conduct a special study into the use of standard assessment tools to determine if merit-based hiring is affected by this form of assessment.
- Continue to respond to employee requests for review of staffing decisions.



Statement of Operations (Previous and Current Fiscal Years)

	Fiscal 2012/13 (previous)		Fiscal 2013/14 (current)
	Budget	Actual	Budget
Funding			
Voted Appropriation	1,024,000	978,240	1,039,000
Total	1,024,000	978,240	1,039,000
Operating Budget and Expenditures			
Salaries	559,000	525,690	582,000
Employee Benefits	109,000	101,155	112,000
Travel	13,000	10,781	13,000
Professional Services	75,000	117,820	75,000
Information Systems	31,000	23,112	31,000
Office and Business Expenses	25,000	10,374	25,000
Information, Advertising and Publications	2,000	0	2,000
Statutory Advertising and Publications	5,000	9,003	5,000
Utilities, Materials and Supplies	2,000	3,365	2,000
Amortization	54,000	36,769	54,000
Building Occupancy	149,000	140,171	138,000
Other Expenses	0	0	0
Internal Recoveries	0	0	0
External Recoveries	0	0	0
Total	1,024,000	978,240	1,039,000
Capital Budget and Expenditures			
Information Systems, Furniture and Equipment	15,000	2,329	15,000
Total	15,000	2,329	15,000



Proposed Budget

By Standard Object of Expenditure (STOB)

		Fiscal 2013/14	Fiscal 2014/15		Fiscal 2015/16	Fiscal 2016/17
		Current Budget	Proposed Estimates	Change	Planned Budget	Planned Budget
STOB	Expense Type					
50	Salaries	440,000	443,000¹	3,000	446,000	449,000
51	Supplemental Salary	5,000	5,000	0	5,000	5,000
52	Employee Benefits	112,000	118,000¹	6,000	124,000	130,000
54	Officer of the Legislature Salary	137,000	137,000²	0	137,000	137,000
57	Travel	13,000	13,000	0	13,000	13,000
60	Professional Services	75,000	75,000³	0	75,000	75,000
63	Information Systems	31,000	31,000	0	31,000	31,000
65	Office and Business Expenses	25,000	25,000⁴	0	25,000	25,000
67	Informational Advertising and Publications	2,000	2,000⁵	0	2,000	2,000
68	Statutory Advertising and Publications	5,000	5,000⁶	0	5,000	5,000
69	Utilities, Materials and Supplies	2,000	2,000⁷	0	2,000	2,000
73	Amortization Expense	54,000	54,000⁸	0	44,000	25,000
75	Building Occupancy	138,000	139,000⁹	1,000	145,000	152,000
85	Other Expenses	0		0	0	0
88	Internal Recoveries	0		0	0	0
90	External Recoveries	0		0	0	0
	Total	1,039,000	1,049,000	10,000	1,054,000	1,051,000
Capital Budget						
	Information Systems, Furniture and Equipment	15,000	15,000 ¹⁰	0	15,000	15,000
	Total	15,000	15,000	0	15,000	15,000



Notes:

1. STOB 50 (Salaries) and STOB 52 (Employee Benefits) include salary increases for Schedule A staff, the Office's portion of Shared Services costs and the increase in the benefits rate.
2. STOB 54 (Officer of the Legislature Salary) includes the salary for the Merit Commissioner, which is set by Order in Council.
3. STOB 60 (Professional Services) includes funding for professional service contracts such as contracts for audit activities.
4. STOB 65 (Office and Business Expenses) includes costs for office supplies, offsite file storage, postal and courier charges, printing and photocopying expenses (other than reports), photocopier leases, newspaper subscriptions, staff training and business meeting expenses.
5. STOB 67 (Informational Advertising and Publications) includes costs for printing public reports other than the Annual Report to the Legislature.
6. STOB 68 (Statutory Advertising and Publications) includes costs for preparation and printing of the Annual Report to the Legislature.
7. STOB 69 (Utilities, Materials and Supplies) includes costs for hydro, recycling, books and supplies.
8. STOB 73 (Amortization) is the cost of repaying the Capital Budget expenditures for tenant improvements, furniture and information systems hardware and software. Tenant improvements and furniture are amortized over five years, whereas information systems expenditures are amortized over 3 years. Amortization costs for tenant improvements on office space will conclude during fiscal year 2015/16; however, the expected reduction in costs will be offset by an increase in base rent (see STOB 75).
9. STOB 75 (Building Occupancy) is the Merit Commissioner's share of the consolidated office space for the four independent offices at 947 Fort Street. Operating costs, such as building insurance and property taxes, are anticipated to increase in fiscal year 2014/15 and in subsequent years. The rate for base rent will increase during fiscal year 2015/16.
10. CAPITAL BUDGET is for the purchase of information systems hardware and software and office furniture and is consistent with the fiscal year 2013/14 budget. Capital amounts are repaid through amortization in STOB 73.



Proposed Budget By Business Area

Business Area	Current Year	Planned		
	Fiscal 2013/14	Fiscal 2014/15 Estimates	Fiscal 2015/16 Budget	Fiscal 2016/17 Budget

Operating Budget (\$000)

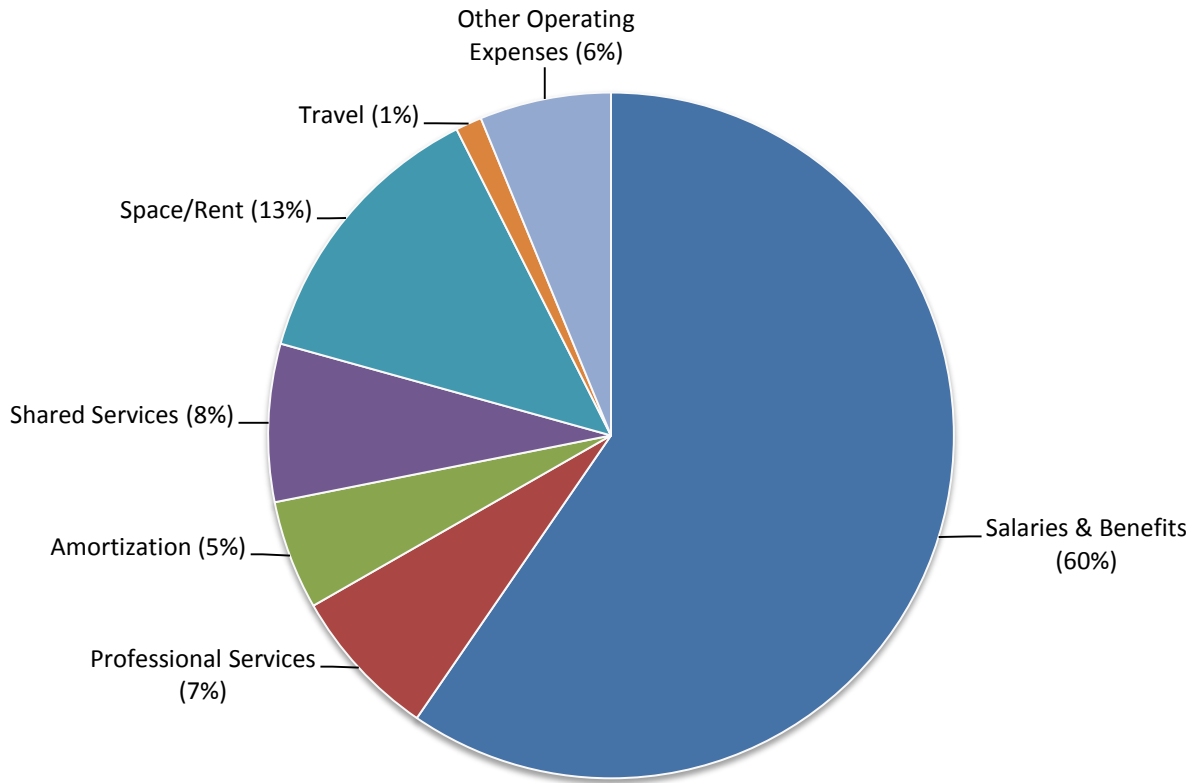
Core Operating Services	958	971	976	973
Shared Services	81	78	78	78
Total	1,039	1,049	1,054	1,051

Capital Budget (\$000)

Information Systems, Furniture and Equipment	15	15	15	15
Total	15	15	15	15



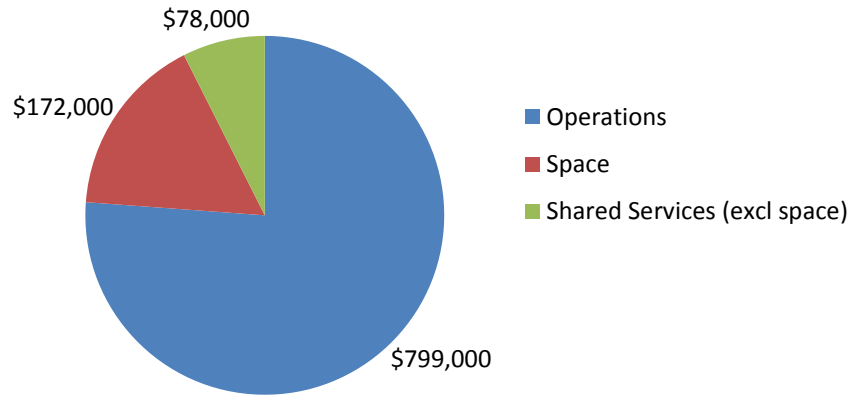
Proposed Operating Budget by Expenditure Type Fiscal 2014/15



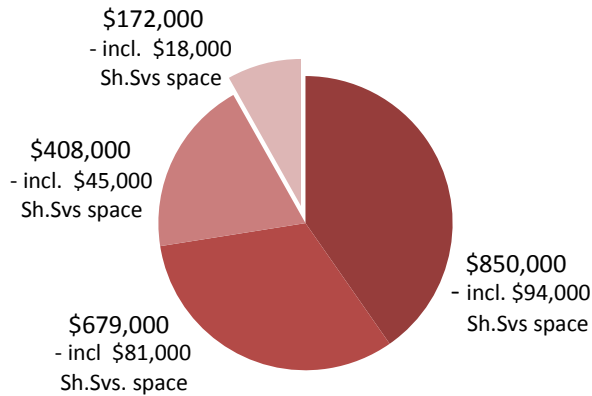


Proposed Space and Shared Services Budgets Fiscal 2014/15

Operational Budget Request
Total: \$1,049,000

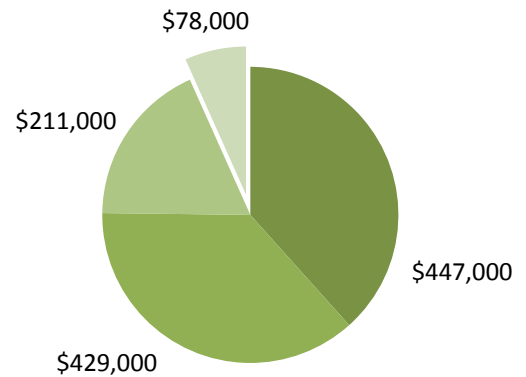


Space Budget, All Offices
(including Amortization of Tenant Improvement Capital Costs)
Total: \$2,109,000



- Ombudsperson
- Info & Privacy Comm.
- Police Complaint Comm.
- Merit Commissioner

Shared Services Budget, All Offices
(excluding Space for Shared Services)
Total: \$1,165,000



- Ombudsperson
- Info & Privacy Comm.
- Police Complaint Comm.
- Merit Commissioner