



Office of the
Merit Commissioner

Budget Submission
Fiscal Years
2019/20 – 2021/22

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

November 21, 2018



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Overview

The Office of the Merit Commissioner (the Office) operates with a small complement of four full-time and two part-time staff. The Office also engages external auditors, legal advisors and other professionals on an as and when required contract basis, and consults as appropriate with an external Audit Advisory Committee. The Merit Commissioner serves as a part-time appointee.

The Office was able to fulfill its statutory mandate and deliver on plans and commitments within the budget allocation for 2017/18. Only approximately two per cent of the voted appropriation remained unspent at the end of March 2018. The Office was able to manage within the initial budget allocation through rigorous budget management practices, including ongoing monitoring and adjustments to spending.

At the beginning of the 2018/19 fiscal year, through amendments to the *Public Service Act*, the Merit Commissioner was mandated to review processes related to just cause dismissals from the public service. When the Merit Commissioner appeared before the Select Standing Committee in May 2018, she indicated that given the timeframes involved she was not yet able to predict the budget implications of this increase in mandate for the 2018/19 fiscal year and beyond. She further indicated that for the first part of the fiscal year she was prepared to manage the additional workload within her existing budget allocation and return to the Committee in November with actual and anticipated expenditures. At that time, the Committee indicated their support for this approach and their openness to considering the Merit Commissioner's request for additional funds either prior to, or at the time of their fall sitting. Consequently, the Merit Commissioner is seeking access to contingency funds for the current fiscal year in the amount of \$75,000.

A total increase in funding for 2019/20 in the amount of \$224,000 is being requested. Of that, \$41,000 is to cover inflationary costs for salary, building occupancy and corporate shared services and \$183,000 is to support the implementation and operations related to the new mandate.

In summary, the Office of the Merit Commissioner requests the following:

- Access to current year funding in the amount of \$75,000
- An increase to the budget allocation in 2019/20 of \$149,000 (12 per cent) which includes one-time funds of \$30,000 for construction costs.



The Office of the Merit Commissioner is one of four Offices of the Legislature that participate in a corporate shared services model. The model provides a pool of funds based on organizational size in order to provide support for facilities, human resources, finance, and information technology. The corporate shared services organization is hosted by the Office of the Ombudsperson.

Mandate

The Merit Commissioner was established as an independent officer in 2006 following changes to the *Public Service Act* in 2005. The creation of an independent officer allowed for a separation of the staffing audit and review function from the organization which had responsibility for developing and implementing staffing policy; and was also intended to improve the efficiency of the process for final review of staffing decisions.

All appointments to and from within the public service must be made on the principle of merit. Merit is commonly accepted to mean that appointments are made on the basis of an assessment of competence and ability to do the job, and are not influenced by patronage. The Merit Commissioner has a mandate to provide independent oversight and insight into merit-based hiring in the BC Public Service through random audits of appointments and to act as the final level for review of staffing decisions, upon request.

The Office provides credible and relevant information about the quality and outcome of staffing processes. This information enables the employer to determine where amendment to policy or practice may be warranted and to bring positive change. The work of the Office supports the broader goal of building employee commitment as well as public confidence that BC's public service is qualified and that hiring is conducted in accordance with the principle of merit.

In April 2018, the *Act* was amended conferring upon the Merit Commissioner responsibility for conducting reviews of processes related to just cause dismissals in the BC Public Service. These reviews will examine whether all government policies, procedures, and standards were properly applied when actions were taken to dismiss employees for just cause from ministries, as well as any agencies, boards and commissions which fall under the *Act*.



Priorities for Fiscal 2019/20

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

- Conduct a Merit Performance Audit designed to examine appointments made to and from within the BC Public Service, report results to organization heads and the BC Public Service Agency, and formulate recommendations for improvement.
- Investigate and respond to employee requests for review of staffing decisions in a thorough and timely manner.
- Develop and implement procedures, systems, tools and resources to enable the conduct of dismissal process reviews.
- Undertake reviews of eligible dismissals that occurred after April 1, 2018.



Statement of Operations

(Previous and Current Fiscal Years)

	Fiscal 2017/18 (previous)		Fiscal 2018/19 (current)
	Budget	Actual	Budget
Funding			
Voted Appropriation	1,125,000	1,102,310	1,141,000
Total	1,125,000	1,102,310	1,141,000
Expenses (STOB)			
Salaries (50, 51, 54)	518,000	515,263	523,000
Employee Benefits (52)	137,000	132,945	139,000
Travel (57)	17,000	12,676	17,000
Professional Services (60)	136,000	150,446	141,000
Information Systems (63)	26,000	25,134	26,000
Office and Business Expenses (65)	15,000	10,705	15,000
Statutory Reporting (68)	12,000	5,915	12,000
Utilities, Materials and Supplies (69)	4,000	4,073	4,000
Amortization (73)	15,000	9,088	15,000
Building Occupancy (75)	152,000	143,065	154,000
Other Expenses (85)	93,000	93,000	95,000
Total Expenses	1,125,000	1,102,310	1,141,000
Capital Budget and Expenditures			
Info. Systems, & Furniture & Equipment	15,000	4,695	15,000
Total Capital	15,000	4,695	15,000



Proposed Budget

By Standard Object of Expenditure (STOB)

		Fiscal 2018/19 (current) Budget	Fiscal 2019/20 Proposed Estimates	Change	Fiscal 2020/21 Planned Budget	Fiscal 2021/22 Planned Budget
STOB	Expense Type					
50	Salaries	373,000	426,000	53,000	465,000	465,000
51	Supplemental Salary	-	-	-	-	-
52	Employee Benefits	139,000	152,000	13,000	160,000	160,000
54	Officer of the Legislature Salary	150,000	150,000	-	150,000	150,000
57	Travel	17,000	17,000	-	17,000	17,000
60	Professional Services	141,000	216,000	75,000	216,000	216,000
63	Information Systems	26,000	28,000	2,000	28,000	28,000
65	Office and Business Expenses	15,000	21,000	6,000	21,000	21,000
67	Informational Adv. and Publications	-	19,000	19,000	19,000	19,000
68	Statutory Adv. & Publications	12,000	12,000	-	12,000	12,000
69	Utilities, Materials and Supplies	4,000	6,000	2,000	6,000	6,000
73	Amortization Expense	15,000	15,000	-	14,000	14,000
75	Building Occupancy	154,000	191,000	37,000	165,000	175,000
85	Other Expenses	95,000	112,000	17,000	114,000	116,000
	Total	1,141,000	1,365,000	224,000	1,378,000	1,390,000

Capital Budget						
	Info. Systems, Furniture & Equipment	15,000	32,000	17,000	8,000	8,000
	Total	15,000	32,000	17,000	8,000	8,000

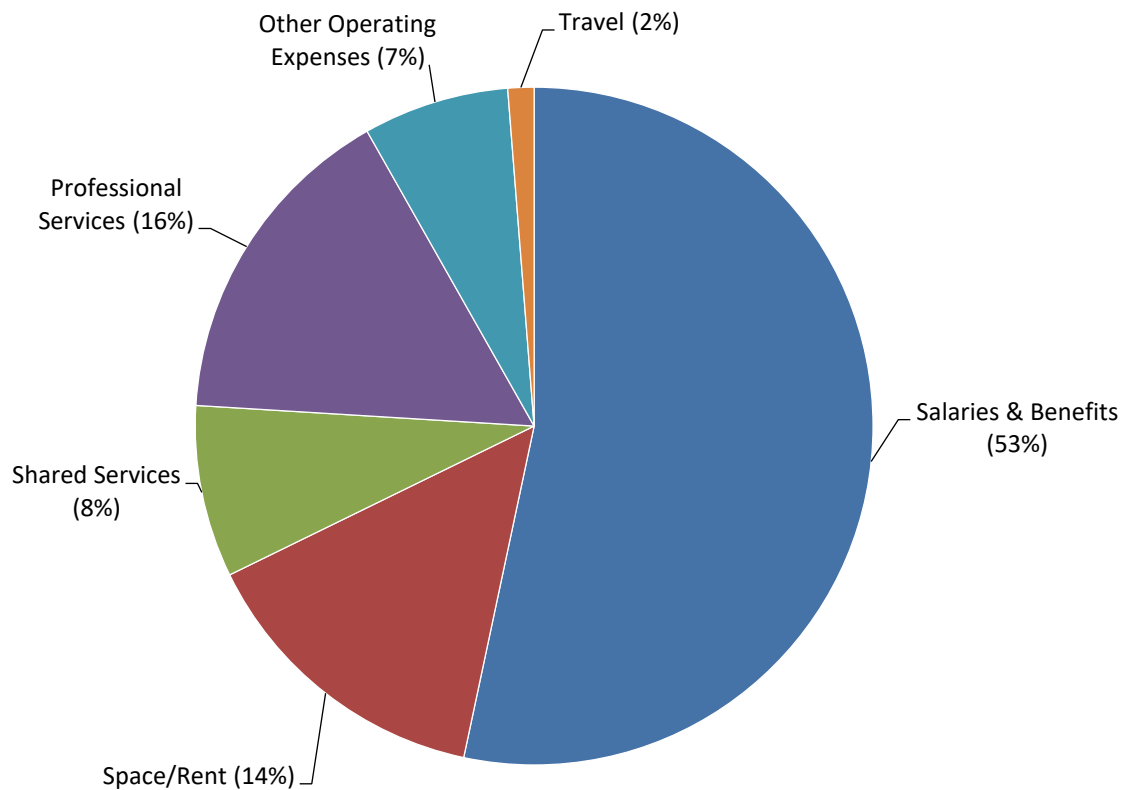


Notes:

1. STOB 50 (Salaries) and STOB 52 (Employee Benefits) includes salaries for existing staff positions and the known financial impact of the salary increases
2. STOB 63 (Information Systems) includes data lines, IDIR accounts, voice services, software licensing, data communication, network security and supplies.
3. STOB 65 (Office & Business Expenses) includes costs for office stationery and supplies, offsite file storage, postal and courier charges, printing expenses (other than reports), news subscriptions, staff training, photocopier leases, and business meeting expenses.
4. STOB 67 (Information, Advertising and Publications) includes costs for producing and distributing communications materials which are not required under statute.
5. STOB 68 (Statutory Advertising & Publications) includes costs for preparing and printing the Annual Report to the Legislature.
6. STOB 69 (Utilities, Materials & Supplies) includes costs for utilities, recycling, books and supplies.
7. STOB 73 (Amortization) is the cost of repaying the Capital budget expenditures for information systems hardware and software, and office furniture. Expenditures for information systems are amortized over three or five years depending on the nature of the purchase. Expenditures for office furniture are amortized over five years.
8. STOB 75 (Building Occupancy) is the proportionate share of the costs associated with the office space of the four independent offices located at 947 Fort Street. Operating costs (e.g., building insurance, hydro, property taxes and maintenance) are anticipated to increase slightly in subsequent years.
9. STOB 85 (Other Expenses) is the amount contributed toward the operations of Corporate Shared Services which include information technology, finance, human resources, facilities and reception.
10. CAPITAL BUDGET is for the purchase of information systems hardware and software, and office furniture. Capital amounts are repaid through amortization expense in STOB 73.



Proposed Operating Budget by Expenditure Type Fiscal 2019/20

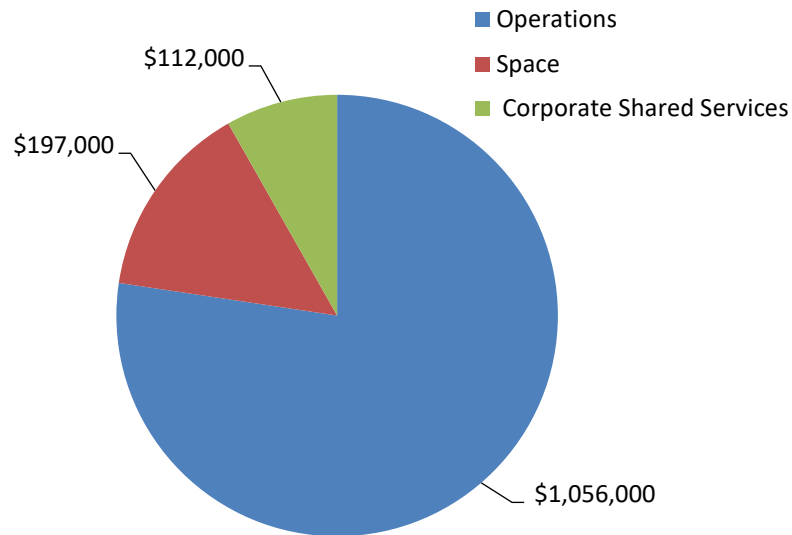


* Other Operating STOBs includes Information Systems (63), Office Expenses (65), Reporting (68), Utilities (69) and Amortization (73)



Proposed Space and Shared Services Budgets Fiscal 2019/20

Operating Budget Request Office of The Merit Commissioner



Corporate Shared Services 2019/20 Budget All Offices

