



Office of the
Merit Commissioner

Budget Submission

Fiscal Years

2021/22 – 2023/24

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

February 1, 2021



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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 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 2019/20. The voted appropriation was 88 percent used. In 2020/21 the Office had the opportunity to conduct dismissal process reviews and determined that the funding set aside for an additional staff member was not required and that additional workload was managed internally and with contracted resources. These changes resulted in a 2021/22 net decrease of \$29,000 when offset with increases on inflation and additional hours for part-time staff.

The Office will face the largest key funding pressure over the next three years due to a joint initiative by four Independent Officers of the Legislature to replace an outdated database system. A proposal is attached separately as part of this budget submission and will be presented to the Committee on February 1, 2021. This database system replacement will impact the Office of the Merit Commissioner's budget most significantly in 2022/23 in the Information Systems operational and capital budget, but also in related human resources.

In summary, an increase in funding of \$12,000 in operating funding and \$15,000 in capital funding is requested for 2021/22 and, in 2022/23, a temporary increase in both operating funding (\$299,000) and capital funding (\$196,000) for the replacement of the database system as outlined in the joint submission from the four offices.

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* (the 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 BC 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 hiring 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 examine whether 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 2021/22

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.
- Undertake reviews of eligible dismissal processes.



Statement of Operations

(Previous and Current Fiscal Years)

	Fiscal 2019/20 (previous)		Fiscal 2020/21 (current)
	Budget	Actual	Budget
Funding			
Voted Appropriation	1,365,000	1,204,325	1,365,000
Total	1,365,000	1,204,325	1,365,000
Expenses (STOB)			
Salaries (50, 51, 54)	576,000	507,466	556,000
Employee Benefits (52)	152,000	133,480	147,000
Travel (57)	17,000	15,561	17,000
Professional Services (60)	216,000	152,406	272,000
Information Systems (63)	28,000	66,079	28,000
Office and Business Expenses (65)	21,000	15,319	21,000
Informational Advertising and Publications (67)	19,000	0	19,000
Statutory Reporting (68)	12,000	4,505	12,000
Utilities, Materials and Supplies (69)	6,000	3,925	6,000
Amortization (73)	15,000	10,402	14,000
Building Occupancy (75)	191,000	183,182	160,000
Other Expenses - CSS Funding (85)	112,000	112,000	113,000
Total Expenses	1,365,000	1,204,325	1,365,000
Capital Budget and Expenditures			
Info. Systems, & Furniture & Equipment	32,000	30,537	12,000
Total Capital	32,000	30,537	12,000



Proposed Operating Budget by Standard Object of Expenditure (STOB)

STOB	Expense Type	Fiscal 2020/21 (current) Budget	Fiscal 2021/22 Proposed Estimates	Change	Fiscal 2022/23 Planned Budget	Fiscal 2023/24 Planned Budget
50	Salaries	476,000	451,000	(25,000)	531,000	451,000
51	Supplemental Salary	-	-	-	-	-
52	Employee Benefits	147,000	143,000	(4,000)	164,000	143,000
54	Officer of the Leg. Salary	80,000	80,000	-	80,000	80,000
57	Travel	17,000	17,000	-	17,000	17,000
60	Professional Services	272,000	272,000	-	272,000	272,000
63	Information Systems	28,000	33,000	5,000	197,000	78,000
65	Office and Business Expenses	21,000	21,000	-	21,000	21,000
67	Informational Adver. 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	6,000	6,000	-	6,000	6,000
73	Amortization Expense	14,000	21,000	7,000	64,000	64,000
75	Building Occupancy	160,000	170,000	10,000	170,000	170,000
85	Other Expenses	113,000	132,000	19,000	132,000	118,000
Total		1,365,000	1,377,000	12,000	1,685,000	1,451,000

Capital Budget

Info. Systems, Furniture & Equipment	12,000	27,000	15,000	237,000	22,000
Total	12,000	27,000	15,000	237,000	22,000



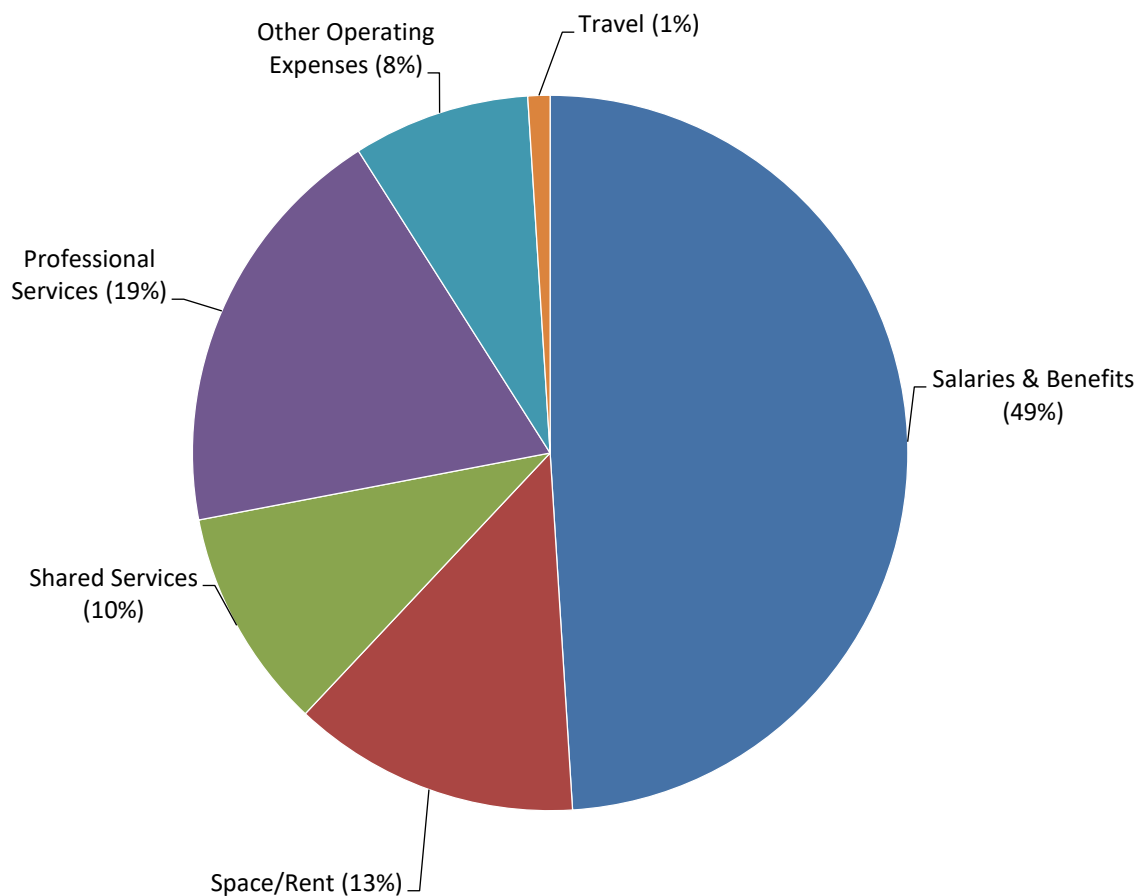
Notes:

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 (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 2021/22

Office of the Merit Commissioner Proposed Operating Budget, by Expenditure Type

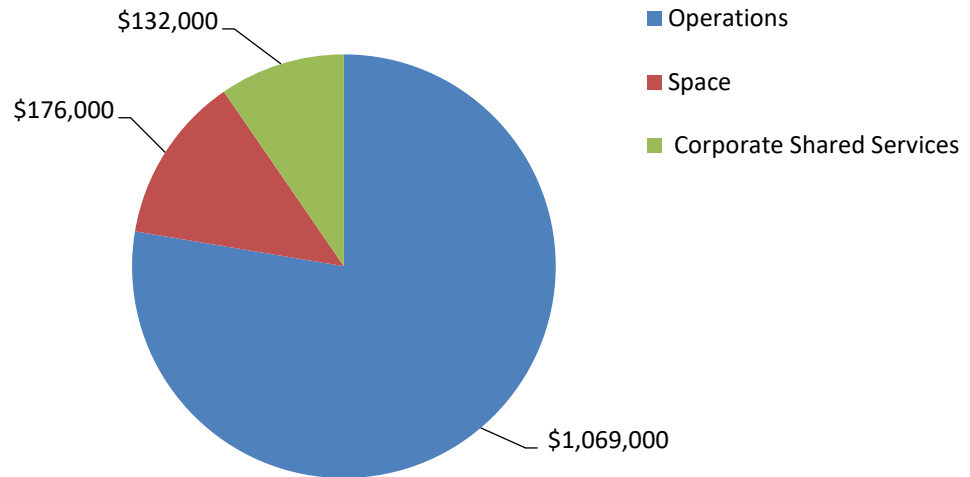


* Other Operating STOBs includes Information Systems (63), Office Expenses (65), Information Advertising and Publications (67), Statutory Reporting (68) and Amortization (73)



Proposed Space and Shared Services Budgets Fiscal 2020/21

Operating Budget Request – Office of The Merit Commissioner



Corporate Shared Services (CSS) 2020/21 Budget – All Offices

