



For immediate release

February 19, 2026

Merit Commissioner statement on proposed legislation to eliminate independent oversight role

VICTORIA – David McCoy, Merit Commissioner for British Columbia, released the following statement on Bill 2, Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2026, which proposes the dissolution of the Office of the Merit Commissioner:

For more than 20 years, the Office of the Merit Commissioner has served British Columbians by providing independent oversight to ensure that hiring within the BC Public Service is based on merit – on competence and qualifications – and, since 2018, that dismissals for cause follow fair and transparent processes. The Office has audited thousands of appointments, reviewed hiring fairness issues brought forward by employees – in some cases, leading to the reversal of flawed hiring outcomes – identified and proposed solutions to systemic issues, and provided dozens of reports and specific guidance to hiring managers that have driven improvements in hiring practices across the BC Public Service. We are proud of that record.

As the second-smallest independent office, we deliver excellent value in the services we provide to the Legislature and the public. A non-partisan multi-party committee of the BC Legislature recognized this in December when they approved a three-year budget for our office to continue our independent oversight of hiring and dismissals process in the BC Public Service. The Committee expressed appreciation for the Office’s “dedicated commitment to upholding merit-based practices in public services hiring.”

Their report, [Report of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, Annual Review of the Budgets of Statutory Offices: 2026-27 to 2028-29](#), was officially tabled in the Legislature on February 18, 2026. Budget documents from the Merit Commissioner’s meeting with the Select Standing Committee for Government and Finances Services in November of last year are [publicly available here](#).

The results of our most recent audit underscore why our work matters. Our [2024/2025 Merit Performance Audit Report](#) found the highest rate of flawed hiring processes and outcomes in nearly a decade. In an organization the size of the BC Public Service, the value of independent oversight goes beyond individual audits. Having independent and objective oversight in place encourages compliance, addresses problems before they arise, and encourages a culture of integrity. The cost of losing independent oversight may ultimately far exceed the savings from eliminating a small oversight body.



Our mandate has expanded over the years to address government accountability needs. Following the [Ombudsperson's 2017 investigation report](#) into the wrongful dismissal of Ministry of Health staff in 2012, government committed to a number of recommendations for improvements, including that the Merit Commissioner oversee dismissal processes to ensure administrative fairness when employees are dismissed for cause. Our mandate expanded to include dismissal reviews in 2018. Only recently, a non-partisan multi-party committee conducted a [legislated review](#) of that responsibility and affirmed the importance of this work and that it remain independent from government.

The proposed legislation would remove the Merit Commissioner's core functions of random audits of hiring processes and dismissal process reviews and, with them, the requirement for government to report on these matters for public transparency. The trust that comes through independent and transparent oversight of provincial hiring and dismissal processes matters more than ever. We believe British Columbians deserve a clear explanation of how the merit principle will be upheld without independent oversight.

Resources:

Office of the Merit Commissioner for British Columbia – office at a glance:
https://meritcomm.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/OMC_At-A-Glance.pdf

2024/2025 – Merit Performance Audit Report: https://meritcomm.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Merit-Performance-Audit_Final-2024_25.pdf

Office history: <https://meritcomm.bc.ca/about/our-history/>

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