

*Strategic Plan 2010 - 2014*



**ombudsperson**

**B.C.'s Independent Voice For Fairness**

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This strategic plan for the years 2010 - 2014 is the fourth for the Office of the Ombudsperson. It is a foundation document that will guide the work and priorities of the office over the next years.

The plan builds upon its predecessors. It sets out our vision, which is that our office is British Columbia's independent voice for fairness, working to ensure that all British Columbians are treated fairly and reasonably by public agencies. It reflects our mandate to ensure the principles of administrative fairness are respected by provincial public authorities in British Columbia.

This strategic plan incorporates the considerable work that has been done by staff, led by our Executive Director of Investigations Linda Carlson, over the past year to ensure that the Office of the Ombudsperson continues to evolve to serve the people of British Columbia by resolving issues of administrative unfairness and by contributing to good governance of public institutions in our province. It focuses on four interconnected goals: ensuring administrative fairness; providing quality service; being a workplace of excellence; and enhancing good governance.

We have also identified key success factors that we will use to measure our progress towards achieving our vision and goals. These key success factors are: the conduct of thorough, impartial and timely investigations; improvements to governance of public agencies through focused, relevant recommendations and changes in their actions, practices, policies and regulations; enhancing productivity and employee well-being through a supportive workplace environment; and increased public and stakeholder awareness of administrative fairness and the role of the office.

The goals set out in this plan will guide us in our annual planning activities as well as in establishing our priorities and measuring our success over the next four years. I would like to thank everyone who contributed their time and energies to create this new strategic plan. I look forward to working with you to change our challenges into opportunities and to build on our strengths so that we can deliver the best service possible to the people and province of British Columbia.

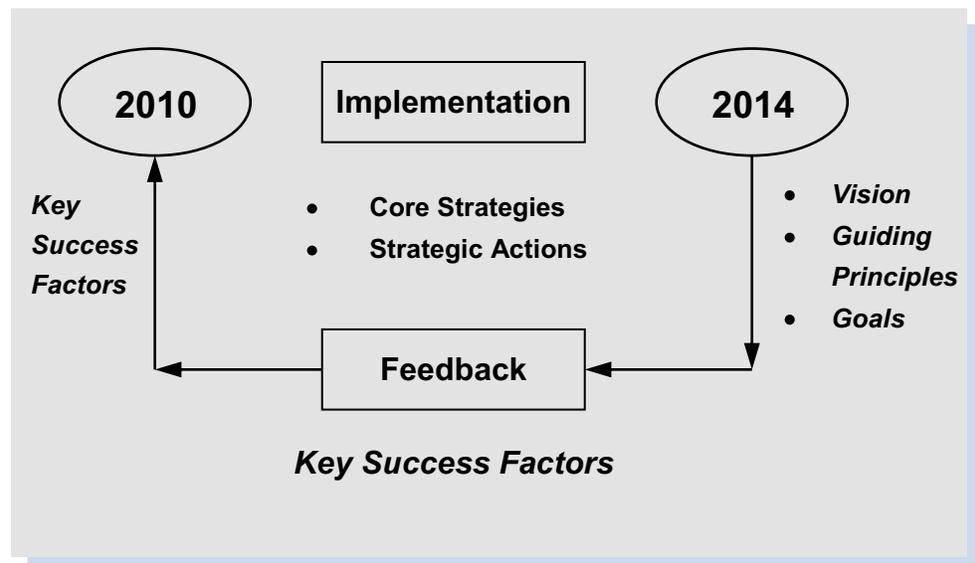
Kim S. Carter  
Ombudsperson  
Province of British Columbia

# Strategic Planning Model

Our strategic planning model is based on six main elements:

- Describing our *VISION*
- Setting out our *MANDATE*
- Identifying our *GOALS*
- Assessing our *CURRENT STATE*
- Implementing *CORE STRATEGIES* and *ACTIONS*
- Identifying *KEY SUCCESS FACTORS*

This strategic plan records each of these main elements. This is the fourth strategic plan for the office and builds upon the results of the three previous strategic plans 1997 - 2001, 2001 - 2006, and 2006 - 2010. It has been developed through a process of consultation and reflects the input of staff and other stakeholders.



*British Columbia's  
Independent Voice  
for Fairness*

*The  
Ombudsperson is  
an independent  
Officer of the  
Legislature  
appointed  
pursuant to the  
Ombudsperson  
Act.*

## ***Why we exist***

- to ensure that every person in British Columbia is treated fairly in the provision of public services
- to promote and foster fairness in public administration
- to uphold the democratic principles of openness, transparency and accountability

## ***Who we serve***

- the public
- the Legislature of British Columbia
- the principles of administrative fairness

## ***What we do***

- respond to inquiries from the public
- provide information, advice and assistance on issues of administrative fairness
- conduct thorough, impartial and independent investigations of complaints
- look for fair resolutions and make recommendations to improve administrative practices
- independently initiate investigations of apparent administrative unfairness
- provide reports to the Legislative Assembly and the people of British Columbia about the work of the office and remedying unfair administrative practices
- generally oversee the administrative actions of public agencies to enhance transparency and accountability

# Guiding Principles

## ***Continuous Improvement***

Supporting continuous learning and innovation

## ***Equality***

Promoting equality, inclusion and access for all persons

## ***High Quality Service***

Being accessible, responsive and accountable

## ***Integrity***

Being independent, impartial, honest and ethical

## ***Leadership***

Ensuring a long term strategic perspective, efficient use of resources and effective communication

## ***Respect***

Treating everyone with courtesy and dignity

## ***Teamwork***

Valuing the diversity, contribution and commitment of our staff

## ***Trusting Environment***

Promoting a unity of purpose and open expression and debate of ideas and opinions

*These guiding principles govern the way we do our work with the public, with public agencies and one another.*

# Goals

We have identified our strategic goals as:

- ensure administrative fairness
- provide quality service
- support a workplace of excellence
- enhance understanding of the principles of good governance

## ***Ensure Administrative Fairness***

*We:*

- identify issues of administrative unfairness
- conduct thorough, timely and impartial investigations
- seek fair resolution of complaints
- provide advice to public agencies on fair processes
- make findings and recommendations based on sound analysis and thorough and impartial investigations that are consistent with our statutory mandate, the principles of natural justice and administrative fairness
- report on issues of current interest to the public and to public agencies
- seek to embed administrative fairness as a core value of good governance in British Columbia

## ***Provide Quality Service***

*We:*

- provide timely and accurate information to assist complainants
- implement actions to enhance access to our office
- achieve fair resolutions of complaints
- assist public agencies to improve the fairness of their administrative processes
- apply effective quality assurance to service delivery
- strive for continuous improvement
- support three other offices of the legislature by providing administrative, human resources, financial and IT support

*These goals are the long-term results we want to achieve in fulfilling the mandate of the office*

## ***Support a Workplace of Excellence***

*We:*

- share a common vision of service
- provide a safe, secure and healthy workplace
- commit to excellence in hiring practices
- provide training, education and other opportunities to enhance skills
- provide clear and current policies and procedures to support work processes
- encourage staff initiative and autonomy within a framework of management support, quality assurance and oversight
- support staff participation, responsibility and empowerment
- maintain a culture of collegiality and teamwork
- acknowledge the contribution of all staff
- support reasonable workloads to enhance organizational effectiveness, staff performance and well-being
- offer a flexible work environment
- use technology to improve the efficiency of the work of our office
- commit to leadership in environmental practices

## ***Enhance Understanding of the Principles of Good Governance***

*We:*

- inform the public about administrative fairness
- educate the public and public agencies about the role of the Office of the Ombudsperson in promoting good governance in British Columbia
- maintain our connection to communities across British Columbia and reach out to underserved communities
- initiate dialogue with public agencies about the principles of administrative fairness
- consult with other administrative fairness stakeholders to build commitment to the principles of good governance
- play an active role in the local, provincial, national and international Ombuds community

### ***We identify our strengths as***

- our positive contribution to life in British Columbia
- the democratic principles of openness, transparency and accountability that we uphold
- respect for the Office of the Ombudsperson by the public and public agencies
- the *Ombudsperson Act*
- collaboration with other offices for sharing services, ideas, procedures and systems
- the diversity, talents, experience and commitment of our staff
- the early resolution of complaints
- a focus on systemic investigations
- the acceptance and implementation of the recommendations that result from our investigations
- the team structure of our office organization
- a strong committed leadership with a long term perspective
- our case tracking system and internal technical support
- the orientation programs we provide for new staff
- our commitment to continuous improvement
- a work environment that supports staff well-being and performance
- the internal quality assurance mechanisms we apply to our work
- a safe, functional, healthy and environmentally responsible work place
- our student employment program
- a commitment to ensure access to our office
- a dedicated resource for public information and outreach
- our website

### ***We identify the following areas for improvement***

- access for complainants
- external communication about our work
- public agencies' and the public's understanding of the role of the Ombudsperson
- internal communications
- employee engagement and satisfaction
- performance standards to measure quality
- resources dedicated to systemic investigations
- opportunities for staff participation in decision-making
- an up-to-date *Ombudsperson Act*

### ***We identify our opportunities as***

- assisting the development of fair internal dispute resolution processes by authorities
- training, development and other opportunities for all staff
- using technology effectively to improve service quality and reduce resource consumption
- developing qualitative performance measures
- continuing to improve our environmental practices
- developing improved corporate memory systems
- increasing awareness of the outcome of our systemic investigations
- sharing the results of our investigations more promptly and broadly, whenever this is in the public interest
- continuing to build awareness and understanding of the role of the Office of the Ombudsperson
- educating the public and agencies to improve their understanding of administrative fairness
- reviewing and updating the *Ombudsperson Act*
- connecting with diverse cultural and geographic communities
- learning from and sharing experiences with other Ombuds organizations
- proactively identifying complaint trends and addressing systemic issues

### ***We identify our challenges as***

- our ability to provide equitable access and high quality services in a geographically, demographically and culturally diverse province
- the lack of awareness and understanding by the public and authorities of the role of the Ombudsperson
- changes in processes for the delivery of public services
- budget restrictions

## Core Strategies and Actions

### ***Ensure Administrative Fairness***

*Use our authority and apply our expertise to identify and address unfairness in the administration of public policy.*

*We will:*

- assist the public to access appropriate internal resolution processes
- appropriately focus our investigations
- complete thorough, timely and impartial investigations
- achieve fair resolution of complaints
- monitor public agencies' commitments to take remedial actions
- assist public agencies to develop appropriate internal complaint resolution processes
- apply a systemic approach to investigations that seeks to resolve underlying administrative problems
- seize opportunities to educate public agencies
- complete useful systemic reports
- appropriately exercise judgement
- hold ourselves to the standards we expect of others
- demonstrate leadership in administrative fairness

### ***Provide Quality Service***

*Demonstrate administrative fairness by applying the principles of fairness in our dealings with complainants and public agencies.*

*We will:*

- provide clear public information about our role and our services
- continue to enhance accessibility (phone, electronic, in person) to our office including the provision of translation or interpretation service
- provide useful assistance and guidance through referral processes
- enhance early resolution
- complete thorough, timely and impartial investigations
- articulate clear, concise and comprehensible reasons for decisions
- hire and retain competent and motivated staff
- ensure training for staff development
- recognize and build on success
- structure our organization to support fair results and quality service
- establish qualitative performance measures
- implement a process for continuous review and improvement

### ***Support a Workplace of Excellence***

*Attract and retain staff who are actively engaged in, motivated to achieve and enthusiastic about the role and goals of the office.*

*We will:*

- provide a safe and secure working environment
- enhance open communication at all levels
- provide interesting and challenging work
- recruit, engage and retain the talent we need to meet or exceed our goals
- provide ongoing and relevant training to develop professional skills
- value contributions of all individuals and teams and celebrate success
- provide tools to enable staff to provide quality service
- enhance individual autonomy and responsibility to deliver quality service
- review our process of evaluation and feedback to ensure it is timely and useful
- provide flexible work options consistent with operational requirements
- demonstrate environmental stewardship

### ***Enhance Understanding of the Principles of Good Governance***

*Showcase the value of our work to British Columbians and the public agencies who serve them.*

*We will:*

- increase our participation at public events and public venues
- continue Ombudsperson outreach regional tours
- expand presentations to public agencies and other stakeholder groups
- focus on under-served communities
- increase reporting of the results of our investigations
- implement an updated communications plan (including expansion of use of electronic media tools)
- promote the establishment of a legislative committee for the Ombudsperson Office

## Key Success Factors

<b>Key Success Factors</b> Used to measure progress towards achieving our goals and vision	<b>Goals</b>			
<b>Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement of:</b>	<b>Ensure Administrative Fairness</b>	<b>Provide Quality Service</b>	<b>Support a Workplace of Excellence</b>	<b>Enhance Understanding of the Principles of Good Governance</b>
Public and stakeholder awareness and understanding of administrative fairness and the role of the Office of the Ombudsperson	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thorough, impartial and timely investigations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Administrative fairness through focused, relevant recommendations and changes in actions, practices, policies and regulations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Healthy workplace environment	✓	✓	✓	✓





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