

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SPEECH TO THE SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE & GOVERNMENT SERVICES April 29, 2024

Michael McEvoy Information and Privacy Commissioner/Registrar of Lobbyists

Good evening, Chair, Deputy Chair, and Members of the Committee.

I would first like to acknowledge and respect that we are meeting this evening on the traditional territories of the Ləkʷəŋən-speaking people of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. As an Officer of this Legislature, I also acknowledge that I am privileged to work with people across many traditional indigenous territories, covering all regions of our Province.

Assisting me this evening are Deputy Commissioners oline Twiss and Jeannette Van Den Bulk, along with Dave Van Swieten, Deputy of Shared Services for the four Officers of the Legislature headquartered at 947 Fort Street.

Tonight I will briefly present the details of my supplemental request to our 2024/25 budget. I have a total request of \$374,000 in operation funds for fiscal year 2024/25, consisting of three items. I have reviewed our 2024/25 budget and have determined that we have exhausted the flexibility with in it, and are not able to absorb these cost pressures without reducing staff.

I will walk you through each item now.

The first regards two cost increases related to Commissioner expenses, both out of the control of our office, relating to the 2022 Judicial Compensation Commission process and the appointment of a new Commissioner.

I will begin with the increases resulting from the JCC process, which ultimately resulted in a salary increase for the Commissioner. As you know, this Committee approved one-time funding in the amount of \$77,000 for the 2023/24 fiscal year to cover the increase.

For fiscal 2024/25, there is an additional amount of \$23,000 due to an April 1, 2024 adjustment to judicial salary and benefits. This means there is a total impact of \$100,000 for our 2024/25 budget.

As I detail in the supplemental submission before you, the increases were not known when we presented our 2024/25 budget in the fall.

As s. 40 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* details, the salary of an appointed commissioner is entitled to be paid out of the consolidated revenue fund equal to the salary to be paid to the chief judge of the provincial court. I am therefore requesting this funding pursuant to that provision. It is my understanding that funding for the purpose of addressing expenditures arising from the JCC process has already been approved by Treasury Board to Ministries.

I also have a request relating to the incoming Information and Privacy Commissioner's relocation expenses.

As you are likely aware, Michael Harvey was appointed the new Commissioner for BC on April 11, with a start date of May 6. He will be coming to us from Newfoundland and Labrador, where he is currently the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I am therefore requesting up to \$75,000 for relocation expenses so he can begin his new duties as scheduled.

My second request to you this morning stems from the need to update the Lobbyists Registry for the ORL, due to the amendments that recently passed in the House. You heard some of the details of the importance of this work on Friday.

I am requesting \$90,000 to complete updates required to the Registry relating to amendments in the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendments Act, 2024. The Act introduced changes to the *Lobbyists Transparency Act* that allow lobbyists to report government funding received every three months rather than every month, removes the requirement to report government funding requested, clarifies the registration requirement for lobbyists who work with other lobbyists or clients of lobbyists for the purpose of lobbying, and clarifies when and how filing obligations end.

We anticipate the changes to the Registry system will take up to six months to implement, and my team is prepared to work with our developers to complete the updates in the 2024/25 fiscal year.

Finally, I am requesting \$109,000 to support our transition to a new case tracker system. As I mentioned in my appearance on Friday the system is built and awaiting to be tested, and is expected to go live in June. This request does not exceed the funding envelop already allocated for this project, it is the fiscal year it is occurring that has me bring this request to you today.

Because of delays out of our control from prior fiscal years, we will need an FTE in 2024/25 to support the transition to the new system, and to ensure any post implementation requirements are prioritized and implemented.

The FTE is for a Business Analyst position that will work with staff and developers to ensure the system meets our day-to-date operational and reporting requirements.

To sum up, I am requesting a supplemental budget of \$374,000, with \$175,000 allocated for Commissioner cost increases, \$90,000 for ORL Registry updates, and \$109,000 for the Business Analyst position for the case tracker replacement project.

With that Chair, I thank you and the Committee for your care and attention to these matters. My team and I would now be pleased to answer any questions you may have.