

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate release

BC's Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ombudsperson, and Merit Commissioner call for changes to enhance Legislative Assembly accountability and transparency

Victoria – BC's Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ombudsperson, and Merit Commissioner are calling for statutory changes to increase transparency and accountability of the administration of the Legislative Assembly.

In a jointly issued letter, the three independent officers outline how the proposed changes are in the public interest. "There is an opportunity to enact a modern transparency and accountability framework for the administrative aspects of the Legislative Assembly," the letter states. These changes are to build on the current audit being carried out by the Auditor General.

The Officers are calling for legislative amendments to the respective Acts that govern their roles, which would provide greater oversight of the Legislative Assembly's administration. These changes include:

- Revisions to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* so that it applies to the Legislative Assembly. The letter states over 2900 public bodies are currently covered by this Act.
- Amendments to BC's not yet in force *Public Interest Disclosure Act*, to have it apply to the Legislative Assembly. The Act is expected to come into force later this year for government ministries and independent statutory offices. Under the Act employees can report wrongdoing either within their organization or to the Ombudsperson and are protected from reprisal for doing so.
- Revisions to the *Public Service Act* to provide the Merit Commissioner the mandate to conduct an independent audit of staffing appointments to and within the administration of the Legislative Assembly. The letter also calls for the ability of the Merit Commissioner to conduct reviews of processes leading to any just cause dismissals of administration staff.

The letter emphasizes that these proposals are being made without reference to the outcome of the current matters concerning the suspended permanent officers. As stated in the letter, the proposed changes would contribute to a transparent, efficient, accountable and effective Legislative Assembly.

Please see attached letter to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner, Merit Commissioner and Ombudsperson will be holding a joint media availability, today, **February 5th at 10:30 a.m.** via teleconference:

Dial-in information: 604-681-0260 (Vancouver)
1-877-353-9184 (From Canada and the US)

Participant pass code: **50955#**

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