

# Ombudsman Fairness Checklist

## Communication

- ❖ Public information is available and understandable
- ❖ Forms are in plain language
- ❖ Clients are given all the information they need
- ❖ Clients are treated with courtesy

## Facilities and Services

- ❖ Telephones are answered promptly
- ❖ Voicemail, answering machines or toll-free numbers are available
- ❖ Premises are easily accessible and suited for wheelchairs
- ❖ The environment is safe and healthy for workers
- ❖ The public's right to privacy is respected

## Decision Procedures

- ❖ Those affected by a decision have a chance to give information and evidence to support their position
- ❖ Decisions are made within a reasonable time
- ❖ Reasons are given for decisions

## Appeal, Review and Complaint Procedures

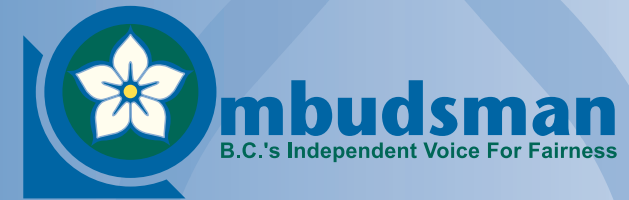
- ❖ At the time of decisions, people are told of any existing appeal or review procedures
- ❖ Complaint procedures are clearly defined
- ❖ The public is asked for ideas on improvements in service

## Organizational Issues

- ❖ Staff are given clear titles for the functions they perform
- ❖ Agencies consider whether reorganizing would provide better quality service
- ❖ Agencies cooperate with one another to provide better service to the public

## Agency Review and Planning

- ❖ The public is invited to participate in planning programs
- ❖ How decisions will be made is clear from the beginning
- ❖ Statistical information needed to evaluate and improve performance is recorded and maintained



### Mailing Address:

Office of the Ombudsman  
PO Box 9039 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria BC V8W 9A5

### Office Location:

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 756 Fort Street  
Victoria BC

### Telephone:

General Inquiries Victoria: (250) 387-5855  
Toll Free: 1-800-567-3247

### Fax:

Victoria: (250) 387-0198

### Or visit our website at:

[www.ombudsman.bc.ca](http://www.ombudsman.bc.ca)

Brochures are also available in French,  
Chinese, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese

## What does the Ombudsman do?

The Ombudsman receives inquiries and complaints about the practices and services provided by public agencies. While not an advocate, the Ombudsman can conduct impartial and confidential investigations to determine if a public agency is being fair to the people it serves.

## The Ombudsman is:

- ❖ an officer of the provincial legislature
- ❖ independent of government and political parties
- ❖ responsible for ensuring that the administrative practices and services of public agencies are fair, reasonable, appropriate and equitable

## The Ombudsman can:

- ❖ provide information about what steps to take in dealing with a public agency
- ❖ try to settle complaints through consultation
- ❖ investigate complaints about administrative unfairness by a public agency
- ❖ make recommendations to a public agency to resolve an unfairness
- ❖ report to the provincial legislature
- ❖ issue public reports

## Who can the Ombudsman investigate?

The Ombudsman has jurisdiction over a wide range of public agencies. Examples include:

- ❖ provincial government ministries
- ❖ Crown corporations such as ICBC and BC Hydro
- ❖ government boards such as WCB and the BC Human Rights Tribunal
- ❖ hospitals, regional and local health agencies, and health-related government agencies such as Medical Services Plan and PharmaCare
- ❖ schools and school districts
- ❖ universities and colleges
- ❖ municipal and regional governments
- ❖ self-regulating professions such as the Law Society, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia

## The Ombudsman does not have jurisdiction to investigate certain agencies.

Some examples are:

- ❖ federal government departments or agencies
- ❖ private corporations
- ❖ courts
- ❖ police

## What kind of complaints can the Ombudsman investigate and who can make a complaint?

- ❖ complaints may be about the unfair administrative decisions or actions of a public agency, including delay, rudeness, negligence, arbitrariness, oppressive behaviour or unlawfulness
- ❖ the Ombudsman may investigate complaints from individuals or groups of people
- ❖ the Ombudsman has discretion to decide which complaints are investigated and which complaints will not be investigated

## When should a complaint be brought to the Ombudsman?

Whenever possible, you should try to resolve your complaint directly with the public agency before coming to the Ombudsman. If you are not able to reach a resolution and you feel that you have been treated unfairly by the public agency, the Ombudsman may be able to help.

When you are dealing with a public agency try to:

- ❖ get the names of the people you are dealing with
- ❖ keep track of their responses, including any relevant dates
- ❖ keep copies of all relevant papers and letters
- ❖ ask how and why the decision was made
- ❖ find out if there is a review or appeal process, and pursue that process where possible (this office may be unable to investigate a complaint where a right of appeal exists)

## How do I contact the Ombudsman?

For more information about our services or to file a complaint, you can contact us by letter, telephone, Internet, or fax machine.

We have an office located in Victoria. Please contact our office prior to visiting to ensure that someone will be available to meet with you.

Our Internet website provides detailed information about the Office of the Ombudsman. A complaint form can be printed directly from our website to assist you in filing your complaint. You can fill out the complaint form and mail it or you can send it to us directly from the web page. If you choose to submit your complaint over the web, a secure Internet connection will be established to maintain confidentiality. We will not use e-mail to communicate about a complaint until methods exist to ensure confidentiality.

**Services of the Ombudsman are free and confidential**