



BUSINESS PLAN 2016-2018

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Message from the Minister

Our government adopted an accountability statement as part of its 2015-18 business plan. It recognized that the ministry's role in workforce and workplace policy and program development contributes to a stronger economy and better quality of life for all Albertans. It supports the objectives of the province by focusing on growing a skilled workforce for the jobs of today as well as tomorrow, in a workplace environment that is safe, fair and healthy.

The Appeals Commission for Alberta Workers' Compensation is an important component of the government's plan to ensure a fair workplace. Its role is to ensure that workers and employers have access to a timely, fair appeals service that is independent of the WCB. The Commission is the final level of appeal for workers' compensation matters in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a timely and fair appeals process consistent with legislation, policy and the principles of natural justice. The Appeals Commission is accountable to the Minister of Labour.

In reviewing the Commission's plan, I am satisfied that it harmonizes with the priorities of the government:

- Continue to provide timely and fair appeals services through the Appeals Commission for Alberta workers' compensation.
- Enhance the existing quality management program to ensure the quality and timeliness of the decisions published by the Commission.
- Enhance access to justice by providing stakeholders with the assistance they require to be active participants in the appeals process.
- Enhance information technology resources, including transitioning to electronic document management, to enable the Commission to be more responsive and timely in the course of appeal.

With the passage of Bill 6: the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, the government estimates that a substantial number of new accounts will be added to the workers' compensation system. This will add significant additional demand to the Commission's current workload. Our government is committed to ensuring that the Commission has the technical and human resources to meet this demand and to maintain its high standards related to both the quality and the timeliness of its decisions.

I applaud the Commission for its rigorous planning process and for the success, it has achieved in previous years in meeting its objectives and goals. I am looking forward to working closely with the Commission in the coming year and anticipate similar favorable results in next year's review.

The Hon. Christina Gray
Minister of Labour





Douglass M Tadman, QC
Chief Appeals Commissioner



Ted Giraldeau
Vice Chair



Donna Maxwell
Vice Chair

The Commission prepares its business plan annually in the context of a three-year rolling forecast. This plan reflects our goals for the period 2016-2018. It builds on our previous plans and provides for a progression of interim goals within the current planning cycle. We originate our goals in the context of our strategic objectives that by definition are long-term. Our strategic objectives parallel those of the government. This plan recognizes the fiscal constraints facing our stakeholders and the province of Alberta resulting from the unparalleled fall in world oil prices over the last 12 months.

Our vision that we lead in the delivery of innovative appeal services coupled with our statutory mission requiring us to provide a timely, fair appeals process independent of the WCB drive our strategic objectives. These objectives have remained unwavering since the origin of our current planning cycle in 2013. As we advance towards the achievement of our objectives, we amend our annual goals and related tactical plan.

Our strategic objectives include: recruitment of new Commissioners; expansion of our training program; expansion of our technology capacity; continuing development of our records and information management systems; development of facilities to house the Medical Panel Office, continuing development of our appeals services group; and finally the continuation of our cost containment plan. We explain these objectives in more detail later in this plan.

Our overarching focus is to increase the Commission's technical and human capacity in order to fulfill our legislated responsibilities. Bill 6, the *Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act* came into effect January 1, 2016. This Act will significantly expand the scope of the workers' compensation system in Alberta adding a significant number of new accounts to the system. This means a significant increase in demand for our appeal services occurring paradoxically, when the term limits imposed by the *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act* threatens the loss of the majority of our experienced adjudicators. These developments have required an unprecedented commitment by the Commission to recruitment, training, orientation, mentorship and the enhancement of our standards. These initiatives are the foundation of our plan to maintain our high standards and performance commitments despite the unrelenting statute based loss of experience commissioners.

In this document, we enunciate our annual goals and tactical plan concurrently with time sensitive performance benchmarks. These benchmarks provide an objective measure to gauge our progress. Our goals and tactical plan form the basis of our budget. Our cost containment policies in turn, shape our budget. These policies center on position consolidation, effective use of computer resources, job sharing, attrition management and a flattening of our organization by reallocating executive time from administrative to adjudicative responsibilities. Together our executive team has created an ambitious plan for the coming year. Based on our team's caliber, and most importantly its demonstrated ability to meet the objectives outlined in our previous annual plans, I am confident we will achieve our stated goals the coming fiscal year.

Yours very truly;

Douglass M Tadman, QC
CEO and Chief Appeals Commissioner

The Appeals Commission for Alberta Workers' Compensation is a quasi-judicial tribunal operating under the authority of the Workers' Compensation Act as the final level of appeal from decisions made by a review body appointed by the system administrator, the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). Our mission is to provide a timely, fair, and independent appeals process consistent with legislation, policy, and the principles of natural justice. As a Government of Alberta entity independent of the WCB, we report to the Minister of Labour. Our Mandate and Roles Document, which is housed with the Agency Governance Secretariat, guides this reporting relationship.

Commissioners, including the Chief Appeals Commissioner, are merit-based appointments recruited through public competition. The Lieutenant Governor in Council uses recommendation of the Ministry of Labour to appoints appeals Commissioners as representative of either the interests of employers or the interests of workers. We qualify new Commissioners for appointment with reference to a competency matrix, and all appeals Commissioners are subject to a Code of Conduct. The Agency Governance Secretariat houses both the competency matrix and the Code of Conduct.

To ensure impartial and unbiased adjudication, legislation prohibits the appointment of WCB employees or members of the WCB Board of Directors as appeals Commissioners. Presently, there are 48 Commissioners – 15 full-time hearing chairs and 33 part-time members. The Chief Appeals Commissioner is the CEO of the Appeals Commission, and directs our operations with the support of an executive team comprising two Vice Chairs, General Counsel, and a Director.

Panels of three Commissioners hear and decide appeals. The WCB must implement our decisions within 30 days. We publish our decisions on the Canadian Legal Information Institute website (www.canlii.org). Legislation intends are decisions to be final and binding, but they are subject to appeal on a question of law or jurisdiction to the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta. An appeal from a decision of the Court of Queen's Bench lies to the Court of Appeal and subsequently to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Alberta Ombudsman may also review our decisions. The Ombudsman operates independently from the Alberta government and elected officials, promoting standards of fairness, and has the authority to make recommendations if an investigation identifies administrative unfairness.

In the 2014/15 fiscal year, we conducted over 1100 hearings, 87% of which featured the in-person attendance of the appellant. An appeal to the Commission provides an appellant with the opportunity to call witnesses, present evidence, and argue their position in a structured but informal setting. Our appeals are not an academic review of WCB decisions. Appellants make their case to our panels entirely afresh. Appellants may call witnesses, present new evidence and reargue their positions. They have every opportunity to explain their position to an unbiased panel of three adjudicators each of whom is entirely independent of the WCB. Legislation simply requires Commissioners to observe the policies established by the Board of Directors of the WCB when deciding an appeal. This requirement provides an objective basis for decision-making and supports similar adjudicative outcomes for similar fact situations. The Commission decides every appeal on its own merits.

Injured workers initiated 83% of appeals received by the Commission. These appeals expressed disagreement with decisions of the WCB review body disqualifying or limiting an appellant's entitlement to benefits. Employers filed the remaining 17% of appeals we received. Generally, these appeals raised issues concerning claim acceptance, cost relief, classification, and assessment as well as policy driven appeals seeking harmonization of legislation and policy.

Our Vision

“The Leader in Innovative Appeal Services”

Our Mission

To provide a timely, fair and independent appeals process consistent with legislation, policy and the principles of natural justice.

Our Values

Respect: We respect all persons treating them with honesty and integrity.

- In our dealings with people we are truthful, ethical and straightforward.
- We show respect by treating all people the way we would like to be treated. In doing so, we consider people's thoughts, aspirations and feelings.

Excellence: We are committed to excellence in service through quality and consistency.

- We believe in setting high standards and striving to achieve them.
- In order to achieve standards of excellence, we recognize that we are accountable for our performance.
- We promote a learning environment by providing opportunities for developing and enhancing skills and knowledge.

Fairness: We achieve fairness by being impartial and unbiased.

- We achieve impartial decision-making by ensuring all of our actions are free of bias and prejudice.
- We believe in treating all individuals equitably.

Co-operation: We achieve co-operation through sincere, open communication and teamwork.

- We are committed to open communication with each other and all individuals who utilize our services.
- We value the freedom and comfort to share our thoughts and feelings, secure in the knowledge they will be given genuine consideration.
- We work together as a team focused on the achievement of common, well-defined goals.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

What it Means

The Lieutenant Governor in Council appoints Commissioners to hear and decide appeals. Every other function and individual within the Appeals Commission exists to support this responsibility. We offer every person affected by a decision of the WCB review body the opportunity of a new hearing before an independent panel. On average, we conduct approximately 900 hearings per year. More than 85% of our hearings are in-person and feature oral evidence and argument and extensive written reasons for decision.

Hearing panels consist of three appeals Commissioners: one hearing chair and two part-time members. Every appeals Commissioner appointed to a panel contributes equally to decision making. However, the hearing chair is in charge of the hearing, facilitates panel decision making and takes the lead in drafting the written reasons for the panel's decision.

As a result of both normal attrition and the term limits imposed by the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act (APAGA), we lose the benefit of our existing complement of adjudicators over time. This means that we must recruit and train new Commissioners to avoid the loss of institutional knowledge and effectiveness that can occur as experienced adjudicators depart. APAGA term limits have introduced a systemic risk to leadership and governance as it forces the loss of the Commission's most experienced adjudicators while inhibiting the Commission's ability to recruit because of the tenuous nature of a Commissioner's employment. The government's recent decision to limit interim reappointment to 18 months, rather the three years permitted by legislation, exacerbates these difficulties.

As experienced members depart, overcoming the erosion of our adjudicator experience has meant a significant reallocation of resources to recruiting, and developing individuals with the necessary competencies and potential to function effectively as Commissioners. Regardless of a Commissioner's credentials, additional training, in-service development, and experience are fundamental to building and maintaining their competency. We estimate that it takes 3 to 5 years to develop a new Commissioner's ability to handle our most complex appeals.

As a result, a significant portion of executive time is now committed to a continuous recruitment and reappointment cycle. Experienced Commissioners support the training and mentorship of developmental Commissioners. In the face of declining average adjudication experience, we have enhanced the resources we commit to training, orientation, mentorship and standards development. These initiatives support our determination to maintain the quality and timeliness of our decisions. The passage into legislation of Bill 6, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act makes this initiative imperative because the government estimates this legislation is likely to add a substantial number of additional accounts to the system.

While these initiatives will ameliorate the problem of forced Commissioner attrition, they do not address the root cause: the premature loss of agency experience because of legislated term limits. Accordingly, we will be recommending to the Minister that Commissioners employed as full-time hearing chairs be exempted from the 12-year term limit imposed by APAGA but remain subject to performance management.

Appeals Commissioners employed, as part-time members would continue to be subject to the 12-year term limit. As the primary purpose of this group of Commissioners is to bring current industrial perspective and judgment to decision-making, the regular refreshment of this group, as term limits expire, will contribute to maintaining the freshness and currency of Commission adjudicators. Under this plan, 40% of Commissioners, the hearing chairs, would be exempted from APAGA term limits, while 60% of Commissioners, the part-time members, would continue to observe the 12-year term limit.

Strategies

- 1. Seek the exemption of full-time hearing chairs from the 12-year term limit established by the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act.
- 2. Increase the number of full-time hearing chairs from 14 to 18 through recruitment.
- 3. Increase the number of part-time appeals Commissioners from 33 to 35 through recruitment.
- 4. Revise the duties of vice chairs to increase the hearing load to a maximum of 50%.
- 5. Establish two ad hoc hearing chairs to maintain monthly decision volumes and develop future hearing chairs.
- 6. Recruit appeals Commissioners in April 2016 and 2017 as required.
- 7. Recruit Calgary Vice Chair.

Performance Measures

Quality decisions—98%	98% of decisions unchallenged, or if challenged, supported by the Appeals Commission's reconsideration process, the Court of Queen's Bench, the Court of Appeal or the Alberta Ombudsman
Timely Hearings—150 days	85% of appeals receive a hearing date within 150 days of the Commissions receipt of an appeal
Timely Decisions—30 days	85% of decisions issued within 30 days of the hearing

Priority 2: Develop a Training, Orientation, Mentorship and Standards Program

What it Means

We are committed to excellence in our decision-making and process. This means that the courts consistently support our decisions and the Ombudsman consistently supports our administrative processes. Stakeholders can also expect our decisions to align with policy and legislation and to reflect previous Appeals Commission decisions on legislation and policy interpretation, ensuring an orderly and predictable appeals environment.

Our processes meet the high standards the courts expect of administrative law tribunals. We process all appeals and issue all decisions within our performance standards relating to quality and timeliness. The first hearing date offered is generally within 150 days of the date an appellant files an appeal. We expect to publish our decisions within a 30-day window following a hearing, and that the courts and ombudsman will support more than 98% of our decisions.

These performance expectations are at risk as the Commission prematurely loses experienced adjudicators due to the term limits imposed by the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act. This legislated attrition overlays normal attrition as careers reach an end or branch in a different direction. This attrition, along with the corresponding recruitment of new adjudicators, requires our unprecedented commitment to training, orientation, mentorship and standards development.

To ensure that our published decision documents, our processes and our operations continue to meet our high expectations, we will enhance our existing quality program by resourcing an enhanced a training, orientation, mentorship and standards program encompassing all of our activities.

A sound quality program begins with asking every stakeholder group to identify the criteria it considers important. In 2015/16, we engaged an independent contractor to begin stakeholder satisfaction surveys to support this initiative. We will use this information to build our quality program in congruence with stakeholder expectations expressed in the satisfaction survey and standards expressed by staff at internal consultation sessions.

In 2015/16, we conducted focus groups, both internally and externally, with respect to one component of our business: the creation of Appeal Documents Packages (ADPs). The focus groups resulted in a series of recommendations that we are working to implement over the coming year. The focus on ADPs in 2015/16 was deliberate. It allowed us to approach quality assurance in respect of one discrete piece of our business that affects all of our internal and external stakeholders. In doing so, we established best practices for upcoming quality assurance initiatives.

In recognition of the importance and scope of our TOMS program, we commenced recruitment for a Knowledge Officer in early 2016. The Knowledge Officer's responsibilities will include quality assurance, training, and knowledge management. We expect to have our Knowledge Officer in place early in the 2016/17 fiscal year.

Strategies

1. Recruit and train a Knowledge Officer, and work with that individual to develop a plan for standards, training, mentorship and orientation at the Commission.
2. Evolve the Commission's current knowledge management database to a more user-friendly system.
3. Identify stakeholder expectations and establish team values, standards and expectations for all departments.
4. Develop objective assessment tools by department.
5. Update orientation materials and re-design the mentorship program, with a view to national best practices.
6. Develop a training schedule that includes medical and legal experts.
7. Retain a research associate to join the Legal Services team.
8. Complete an external survey in early 2017.

Performance Measures

May 2016	Retain Knowledge Officer
September 2016	Review and finalize, training, orientation, mentorship and standards plan
October 2016	Retain a Research Associate
December 2016	Identify team values, standards and expectations for all departments
December 2016	Identify an appropriate platform for the knowledge management database and commence transition to that platform
April 30, 2106	Review and Standardize reporting to measure standards achievements
April 30, 2017	Schedule one medical & one legal seminar this fiscal year

Priority 3: Enhance Appeal Services

What it Means

We strive to be an open and transparent organization and to provide our stakeholders with the assistance they require to be active participants in the appeals process. Enhancing appeals services means:

- fostering a friendly and receptive attitude amongst our staff and members;
- ensuring the diversity of the Appeals Commission matches the diversity of Alberta;
- simplifying our forms and processes;
- shortening appeal preparation time by leveraging appropriate technology readily accessible to our stakeholders;
- continuous training of our appeals services staff;
- facilitating the appearance of appellants not located in Edmonton or Calgary by video conference at hearings; and
- providing timely, useful and accessible information to appellants electronically via an updated website.

Strategies

1. Redesign our website and update the content available online to reflect our standards and to emphasize our independence from the WCB and our accountability to the Government of Alberta.
2. Continue updating and creating reference materials, including Appeal Rules and Practice Guidelines, for internal and external stakeholders.
3. Create training videos for stakeholders.
4. Introduce videoconferencing equipment into every hearing room and identify secure software for its use.
5. Develop strategies for the secure exchange of electronic information between the Commission and interested parties focusing on distribution of electronic ADPs, the electronic filing of appeals and the use of e-mail to communicate with our clients;
6. Introduce AV equipment to permit interested parties to introduce audio and video evidence at hearings;
7. Facilitate staff development to build a client centric organization.

Performance Measures

November 1, 2016	Training Video completed illustrating hearing process
June 1, 2016	All hearing rooms equipped with video conferencing equipment
June 1, 2016	Hearing rooms equipped to facilitate use of audio and video evidence by interested parties
September 1, 2016	Technology identified to facilitate secure exchange of electronic documents with interested parties
January 30, 2016	All Appeals Service staff completed customer service training
February 28, 2017	Finalize annual revision of Appeal Rules & Practices
April 30, 2017	Develop a web-based tool to support electronic communication between the Commission and interested parties. Include the ability to submit notice of appeal and other related forms online & the ability to transmit and receive appeal related documentation in electronic format. Develop a training plan for Appeals Services staff to allow them to better serve Commissioners

Priority 4: Develop the Commission Technology Capacity

What it Means

We are dedicated to the continuous development of our technology capacity. Our objectives include a reduction in appeal time lines; broadened electronic access; increased staff productivity, enhanced security, a reduction in operating cost, and a decrease in our environmental footprint.

The Commission has made strong gains towards the realization of these objectives. Working with external consultants and stakeholders, the Commission developed a unique claims management application called the Appeals Commission Electronic System (ACES). We based this solution on Microsoft Dynamics CRM technology. The ACES application is an electronic appeals management tool that offers single, integrated platform to assist in processing and tracking each appeal from intake, through review, case management, hearing, and decision-making. We derive from ACES the performance metrics we use to manage our responsibilities.

Although ACES increased our ability to manage our workload, and measure our progress, we continued to base the appeal process on the copying, handling and circulation of printed documents. In 2013, we used about 1.5 million pieces of paper annually. This practice was discordant with our progression towards operational efficiency. The expense and delay associated with copying, circulating, analyzing, storing and shredding resulted in significant unnecessary expense, created needless privacy risks and failed to meet environmental best practices.

As a first step towards a modern electronic office, Legal Services, from both the Commission and stakeholders, worked with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, our Ministry, and legislative staff to secure legislative change to facilitate electronic information sharing between the Appeals Commission and the WCB. This work resulted in the passage of legislation in 2014 permitting the Commission and the WCB to work together to share essential information electronically motivated by a simple slogan: one client – one claim file – one IT environment.

The consequence of this development has been a significant boost in productivity as appeal document packages could now be prepared by our staff directly from the WCB claim file using electronic tools facilitating the efficient sorting, annotation and circulation of relevant documentation. These efficiencies resulted in a reduction in appeal timelines of approximately 10 days, eliminated over 85% of our paper usage and vastly improved the security of the information we handled.

The next step in our progress towards a modern paperless office is to equip Commissioners with laptops to enable this group to utilize electronic files. We expect that with training and experience, we will be able to improve adjudication efficiencies while eliminating most of the paper currently associated with the appeals process. Levering the government’s robust IT environment, including its virtual private network, means for the first time, Commissioners can work on virtual documents that reside on secure government servers without the need to make local copies. This will represent a quantum leap in our ability to protect the information that we receive.

Working within the secure environment offered by the Office of the Appeals Advisor, we will expand our current test related to the distribution of electronic documents and their use in our hearings. As we progress, we will expand the sharing of electronic documents to include all representatives through our website. Ultimately, we expect to provide to all interested parties the advantages offered by electronic communication and document exchange. We anticipate this development will increase stakeholder satisfaction with the appeals process. Despite our move towards electronic documents, we will continue to accommodate individuals not yet ready to manage an electronic interface by providing paper files.

In conjunction with our movement to electronic documentation, we will also begin to promote the attendance of witnesses located in remote regions through videoconference. We have prepared our hearing rooms in Edmonton and Calgary to enable the use of videoconferencing equipment. Once we have addressed the security issues associated with electronic attendance at our hearings, this development will permit witnesses and representatives to appear and participate in our hearings from remote locations eliminating the inconvenience and cost of travel.

Strategies

- 1. Finalize the migration and alignment of the Commission's IT environment to Service Alberta
- 2. Source and incorporate software to allow for the secure videoconferencing between the Appeals Commission and external parties
- 3. Incorporate GOA IT security protocols to ensure the Commission is in alignment with government privacy and security policies related to the transmission of documentation and witness testimony through video conferencing
- 4. Continue to develop ACES to enhance the effective and efficient processing of appeals and further refine data capture and reporting
- 5. Redesign the Commission website to include submission of online forms and a secure single sign-on portal that will allow external users to exchange claim file documents with the Commission
- 6. Improve the application technology used for the manipulation and annotation of PDF documents
- 7. Integrate existing technology to enhance internal communications

Performance Measures

March 31, 2016	Complete migration of Appeal Commission data to the GOA
April 30, 2016	All Commission personnel and Commissioners on Lync
May 1, 2016	Provide all OICs laptops
June 1, 2016	Source and install software to facilitate OCR / Annotation / Sorting of ADP's by Commissioners
June 1, 2016	Complete Commissioner training and migrate all data to secure SharePoint directory & close personal directories
July 15, 2016	Prepare Website Content Plan
July 30, 2016	Complete RFP for website vendor selection
August 30, 2016	Select vendor for the Website redesign project
September 1, 2016	Implement a GOA sanctified videoconferencing solution
October 30, 2016	First Commission hearing featuring electronic attendance of a representative and/or interested party
November 30,2016	Complete content package for website
April 3, 2017	Website goes live

What it Means

A Records and Information Management (RIM) System plays a major role in the effective administration of the Commission as a public body. It supports open and transparent business activities and transactions while also protecting individual privacy in the interests of the public body.

We are committed to developing a RIM System that manages, administers controls, provide security for, and preserves all of our records. Records include physical and electronic records in our custody or control, such as filing systems, databases and other paper or electronic records.

Developing a RIM System means:

- enabling comprehensive and efficient management of information assets;
- ensuring all processes and protocols are in compliance with the government of Alberta's records management system and standards;
- supporting consistency, continuity and productivity in operations, administration and management;
- improving access to services and better performance of business activities;
- providing protection and support in hearing to litigation, including the better management of risks associated with the existence or lack of evidence of activities or events; and
- enabling the public body to meet legislative and regulatory requirements.

Strategies

- 1. Ensure all policies and procedures continue to be updated so that they are current and fulsome, reflecting compliance with the Government of Alberta's and ARMA's standards;
- 2. Socialize Records Retention and Disposition Schedules for all records to ensure conformity and consistent practices;
- 3. Implement processes for a complete transition to an electronic records and information management system, including a disposition project for outdated records, metadata capture to comply with court standards for evidence, and quality assurance processes;
- 4. Implement processes to standardize a functional classification model and electronic version controls for ease of accessibility and use, and in accordance with Service Alberta's model;
- 5. Develop and implement a Vital Records Framework.

Performance Measures

March 15, 2016	Implementation of a functional classification system with consistent name controls of all hard copy records, with quality assurance measures and a tracking system
May 1, 2016	Implementation of phased approach to digital transfer of network records to Sharepoint
June 30, 2016	Establish limitation warning system
July 1, 2016	Implementation of processes to support a functional classification system with consistent version controls of all electronic records
September 1, 2016	Development of Vital Records Framework
December 1, 2016	Completion of annual RIM training for all employees

Priority 6: Accommodations for the Occupational Health and Safety Council and Medical Panel

What it Means

Organizational capacity is in part dependent on having adequate physical premises to meet the Commission's legislative responsibilities. This includes secure hearing facilities, appropriate office and meeting space to house the primary functions of the Commission. This embraces intake, appeal administration, hearing and adjudicative functions, and includes staff & Commissioner training and education. In fiscal 2014/15, the Commission redeveloped its Edmonton offices, moving from Energy Square to the Standard Life Building. In fiscal 2015/16, the Commission redeveloped its Calgary offices, moving from the Braithwaite Boyle building, to AMEC Place. The Commission completed both projects under budget and on time with little disruption to our hearing schedule. Both adhere to government development guidelines promoting efficient use of space and security for staff and clients. The Commission had occupied each of the previous premises for 25 years and both were fully depreciated and in need of renewal.

These new premises each have the benefit of 20-year leases, with rates fixed for the initial 10-year lease term, each with two five-year terms to follow at market value subject to arbitration. These functional new premises will provide a stable home for the Commission for the next two decades. We developed these premises with growth in mind and in contemplation of the possibility that amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act would significantly expand the number of accounts within the compensation system because of the addition of farm and ranch workers to those workers already included within the provincial compensation scheme. Our building plan also addressed our continued administrative support and housing of the Occupational Health and Safety Council.

In 2015, as part of our ongoing cost containment strategy, we volunteered to house, on a temporary basis, both the office of the Medical Panel Commissioner and the Occupational Health and Safety Council. Presently, Commission staff provides all administrative support for the OH&S Council's activities, which uses our hearing rooms to conduct its hearings. The medical panel office is self-contained within our Edmonton facility, but occupies office space and uses our facilities to conduct its business.

While the Commission's initiative to house these agencies saved substantial capital investment in 2015, this saving came at a cost. Dedicating space to these external agencies meant that we were unable to develop a boardroom/training room in our Edmonton offices for the use of our Commissioners and staff. Presently, there are approximately 30 Commissioners in Edmonton but we have no facility to contain this many individuals.

Moreover, the Commission's facilities are not ideal for the medical panel office that requires a discrete and properly equipped examination room for the use of its medical examiners, or ideal for the Occupational Health and Safety Council. Both prefer less formal space that is more suited to mediation.

In making this space available, neither the Commission, nor the ministry contemplated that this arrangement would become permanent -it was to be at short-term expedient to facilitate the acquisition by the Medical Panel Office of permanent office space in the Standard Life Building. We are concerned about the optics of associated with the Medical Panel Office, intended by legislation to be an independent entity, operating within the structure of the Appeals Commission for more than a temporary period.

For these reasons, we propose to develop approximately 2500 feet within the Standard Life Building to provide office and appropriate examination facilities for the Medical Panel Commissioner and to develop a boardroom/training facility/hearing facility for the joint use by the three agencies.

Strategies

- 1. Gain approval for the development of new space
- 2. In partnership with Alberta infrastructure, negotiate the terms of the new lease
- 3. Develop and design the new space through Tenant Improvements funding and an approved designer

Performance Measures

May 2016	Obtain project approval
June 2016	Identify a potential contractor and designer
July 2016	Complete design requirement
August 2016	Commence project construction
October 2016	Completion of project

In order to align our budgetary practices with the Government of Alberta cost containment strategies, we have developed a range of initiatives that target all areas of the Commission. Each initiative underscores our primary mandate while promoting cost effective practices. In total, we anticipate these initiatives will save approximately \$1, 029, 600, which makes up approximately 9% of our total budget.

INITIATIVE	Estimated Cost Savings
Initiative Reduction of administrative costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Use of Service Alberta printing services and reduction of associated costs for in-house printing staffElimination of unnecessary access and storage charges through the implementation of standardized records management practicesReduced travel between Calgary and Edmonton through the use of video conferenceReduce individual training Effective human resources management: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Deferred recruitment of medical consultantReduce, through attrition, 2 Hearing Chair positions	<div>\$54,000</div> <div>\$3,000</div> <div>\$34,000</div> <div>\$15,000</div> <div>\$100,000</div> <div>\$400,000</div>
TOTAL PROJECTED SAVINGS	\$606,000

Approved Budget vs. Revised Cost Containment Budget

Approved Budget:	\$13,521,000
Revised Cost Containment Budget:	\$12,915,000
Variance	\$606,000

Priority 1: Recruit New Commissioners		
Task	Delivery Date	Achievement Date
Establish two ad hoc hearing chairs to maintain monthly decision volumes and develop future hearing chairs	June 1, 2016	
Increase the number of full-time hearing chairs from 14 to 18 through recruitment	September 1, 2016	
Increase the number of part-time appeals Commissioners from 33 to 35 through recruitment	September 1, 2016	
Revise the duties of vice chairs to increase the hearing load to a maximum of 50%	September 1, 2016	
Seek the exemption of full-time hearing chairs from the 12-year term limit established by the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act	January 1, 2017	
Recruit appeals Commissioners in April 2016 and 2017 as required	Ongoing	
Recruit Vice Chair Calgary	October 1, 2017	

Priority 2: Develop a Training, Orientation, Mentorship and Standards Program		
Task	Delivery Date	Achievement Date
Review and finalize, training, orientation, mentor ship and standards plan	September 1, 2016	
Retain a Research Associate	October 1,2016	
Identify team values, standards and expectations for all departments	December 1,2016	
Identify an appropriate platform for the knowledge management database and commence transition to that platform	December 1, 2016	
Review and Standardize reporting to measure standards achievements	April 1, 2017	
Schedule one medical & one legal seminar this fiscal year	April 1,2017	

Priority 3: Advance Appeals Services		
Task	Delivery Date	Achievement Date
Training Video completed illustrating hearing process	November 1, 2016	
All hearing rooms equipped with video conferencing equipment	June 1, 2016	
Hearing rooms equipped to facilitate use of audio and video evidence by interested parties	January 30, 2016	
Technology identified to facilitate secure exchange of electronic documents with interested parties	September 1, 2016	
All Appeals Service staff completed customer service training	January 30, 2016	
Finalize annual revision of Appeal Rules & Practices	February 28, 2017	
Develop a web-based tool to support electronic communication between the Commission and interested parties	April 30, 2017	

Priority 4: Develop Technology Capacity		
Task	Delivery Date	Achievement Date
Complete migration of Appeal Commission data to the GOA	March 31, 2016	
All Commission personnel and Commissioners on Lync	April 30, 2016	
Provide all OICs laptops	May 1, 2016	
Source and install software to facilitate OCR / Annotation / Sorting of ADP's by Commissioners	June 1, 2016	
Complete Commissioner training and migrate all data to secure SharePoint directory & close personal directories	June 1, 2016	
Prepare Website Content Plan	July 15, 2016	
Complete RFP for website vendor selection	July 30, 2016	
Select vendor for the Website redesign project	August 30, 2016	
Implement a GOA sanctified videoconferencing solution	September 1, 2016	
First Commission hearing featuring electronic attendance of a representative and/or interested party	October 30, 2016	
Complete content package for website	November 30, 2016	
Website goes live	April 3, 2017	

Priority 5: Develop a Records and Information Management System		
Task	Delivery Date	Achievement Date
Implementation of a functional classification system with consistent name controls of all hard copy records, with quality assurance measures and a tracking system.	March 15, 2016	
Implementation of phased approach to digital transfer of network records to Sharepoint	May 1, 2016	
Establish limitation warning system	June 30, 2016	
Implementation of processes to support a functional classification system with consistent version controls of all electronic records	July 1, 2016	
Development of Vital Records Framework	September 1, 2016	
Completion of annual RIM training for all employees	December 1, 2016	

Priority 6: Develop Medical Panel office		
Task	Delivery Date	Achievement Date
Obtain project approval	July 1, 2016	
Identify a potential contractor and designer	September 1, 2016	
Complete design requirement	November 1, 2016	
Commence project construction	January 1, 2017	
Completion of project	April 1, 2017	

Contact Information

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