

- future performance and adds credibility and transparency to the assessment.
- Notification: not all employee applicants received notice that an appointment had been made, as required by policy and collective agreements.
- Standards of Conduct: 3 instances of real or perceived conflict of interest were found.

There were many positive examples of merit-based staffing practices including:

- Keeping applicants well-informed throughout the competition process;
- Assessment of relative merit on entrance into the public service, no matter the term of the appointment;
- Use of more than one assessment method; and
- Creation of pools or inventories of qualified candidates.

2. Review results

The second method of oversight is to provide a final and binding decision to expedited appeals by employee applicants of proposed appointments in bargaining unit positions.

Of the 18 eligible requests for review this year, 1 proposed appointment was found not to comply with merit. It was reconsidered by the Deputy Minister.

Outreach

During the first year of the new independent Office, the Merit Commissioner met with the stakeholders of the BC Public Service and spoke about her role to employees in Prince George, Kamloops, Burnaby, Surrey, Vancouver and Victoria.

Looking ahead

Although the 2006 audit shows that, overall, 96% of appointments were the result of a merit-based process, the audit results do not reflect the whole picture. The 2006 work environment survey found only 40% of employees agreed that the process of selecting a person for a position in their work unit was based on merit. To find out the reasons for these responses, the Merit Commissioner's Office commissioned focus groups with employees in various parts of the province. A public report of this work will be made available.

In 2007, the Office will continue to provide further insight into the application of the merit principle through a special audit of direct appointments (made without competition), and by conducting a broader annual audit of appointments.

In 2008, we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of merit in the BC Public Service, and invite your participation.



Merit in the BC Public Service 2006/2007 *At a Glance*

**Oversight, Insight, and Foresight into
Merit in the BC Public Service**

Website: www.meritcomm.bc.ca

The Merit Commissioner provides oversight of the principle of merit in hiring and promotions within the BC Public Service. Merit-based hiring is a cornerstone of a professional and competent public service.

At a Glance is a summary of the main findings of the 2006/2007 Annual Report available on the website.

The report details the findings of the largest audit of new appointments ever done. The results of the 2006 audit were encouraging but show areas where improvement is needed.

At a time when skilled employees are in high demand, and have more choice than ever, merit is critical to employee satisfaction and to public confidence in government services.

Fair staffing practices used by hiring managers can make a difference whether individuals choose to come to, and employees remain with, the public service.

I believe government's goal of a highly-engaged work force can only be achieved with merit-based staffing practices.



Joy Illington, Merit Commissioner

What is the principle of merit?

Merit means that appointments will be non-partisan and based on an assessment of competence and ability to do the job.

Monitoring the application of merit

The Merit Commissioner monitors the application of the principle of merit in two main ways - through audits and appeal reviews.

1. Audit results

The Office of the Merit Commissioner conducts random audits of public service appointments. The audits check whether the appointments were the result of a merit-based recruitment and selection process and whether the individuals appointed were qualified to do the job.

A total of 8% of appointments made in 2006 were audited. The audit focused on the type of appointments that provided the most information about merit: regular, temporary appointments over seven months, and direct appointments.

All audited appointments found that the individuals appointed possessed the required qualifications for the positions to which they were appointed and there was no evidence appointments were based on patronage.

Was merit applied in the selection process?	
Conclusion	# of Appointments
Yes	249 (81%)
Yes, with exception*	47 (15%)
No	9 (3%)
Could not tell	3 (1%)
Total Appointments Audited	308

* These were merit-based but the process of recruiting or selection involved exceptions to staffing policy or collective agreements.

Observations on staffing practices

Some of the areas for improvement were:

- Documentation: Many files were missing records – only 12% were completely documented.
- Restrictions: 43% of audited competitions were restricted to current employees. Of those, 46% had further restrictions. The Corporate Human Resources Plan released in October, 2006 has now mandated all competitions are to be open to the public.
- Assessment: Flaws found in hiring which affected the fairness of the process are described in the report.
- Past work performance: Many of audited files did not include evidence that references were checked. Past work performance is a strong predictor of