

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

Sept. 19, 2019

Gaps and weaknesses in policy framework and practices at the Legislative Assembly

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia has released a new report: Expense Policies and Practices in the Offices of the Speaker, Clerk and Sergeant-at-Arms.

The audit found a number of weaknesses and gaps in the expense policy framework for the offices of the speaker, clerk and sergeant-at-arms. Some policies were in place, but they were not always followed. Travel expenses were frequently made without clear documentation to support the purpose of travel. Some expenses were made without appropriate approval or a clear business purpose and purchases of items, such as clothing and gifts, were made in the absence of policy to guide those transactions.

“We found that there was no specific travel policy for staff and officers of the Legislative Assembly,” said Carol Bellringer, auditor general. “The practices we observed in this area would not have been allowed in ministries.”

The Legislative Assembly did have a policy in place for the use of purchasing cards. However, the office identified a number of instances where purchasing card practices did not follow the stated policy.

Finally, the office found that there was no effective mechanism for reporting policy violations directly to the Legislative Assembly Management Committee (LAMC). The issues found could have been mitigated if the Legislative Assembly had clearly assigned responsibility for ensuring that policies are being consistently followed and that any significant or systemic breaches of policy are being reported to an appropriate authority.

“LAMC needs to ensure the administration of the Legislative Assembly sets the bar for controlling, overseeing and ensuring the efficient and effective use of public resources in an organized fashion,” Bellringer said. “To that end, we made nine recommendations to the legislative assembly.”

The office’s practice is to refer any unusual or potentially fraudulent transactions to management, or the appropriate authority, for further investigation. In the course of this audit, no such referrals were made, beyond what is included in the report.

This is the office’s first performance audit report in a planned series of audits on the Legislative Assembly. It was prompted by the speaker’s report, released in January 2019. Upcoming audits in the series will focus on fixed assets, compensation and benefits, governance, and a further look at purchasing card administration and usage across the Legislative Assembly.

The full report is available on the Office of the Auditor General website: www.bcauditor.com.

Bellringer will answer questions pertaining to the report via a news conference only.

News conference date: Thursday, Sept. 19, 2019

Time: 10:30 a.m. (Pacific time)

Dial-in information:

From Vancouver: 604 681-0260

From elsewhere in Canada and the U.S.: 1 877 353-9184

Participant pass code: 44848#

During question-and-answer period:

To ask a question: press 01

To exit the question queue: press #

About the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

The auditor general is a non-partisan, independent officer of the legislature who reports directly to the legislative assembly. The Auditor General Act empowers the auditor general and staff to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

Contact us:

For general questions

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Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

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