



HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY  
Newfoundland and Labrador

**Sarah Stoodley, MHA**  
**Mount Scio**

May 15, 2023

Review of Statutory Offices of the House of Assembly:

Thank you for undertaking this review of our statutory offices. I would like to provide feedback in my capacity as MHA for Mount Scio as well as provide information as Minister responsible for the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

Feedback relating to the Terms of Reference:

**1. Minimum competencies for each statutory officer:**

I believe it is important that the statutory officers have robust backgrounds in their areas of work. I have concerns regarding the use of external legal counsel and the expenses incurred as a result that fall to taxpayers. In the review of competencies, I believe it is relevant to consider legal expertise and what model can be leveraged so that the statutory offices can have or get expert legal advice if necessary but that it is not an assumed expense. I am not able to comment on whether or not each officer should have a legal background, but I believe there is value in reviewing how other jurisdictions enable legal services for their statutory officers.

**2. The number and makeup of statutory offices:**

I believe not all statutory officer roles need to be full time roles. We do not need the best model possible, I believe we need an approach that is right-sized for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and our five hundred thousand residents.

**3. What is an appropriate administrative oversight model for the statutory offices:**

As shown in the graphs in Appendix A and B, the number of staff as well as the budgets of statutory offices have increased notably since they started. I am aware that these offices report

to the House of Assembly, but as per the appropriate oversight model referenced in this reviews' Terms of Reference, I do challenge whether these offices provide appropriate value for residents in the fulfilment of their mandates.

**4. Whether physical space and administrative functions could be shared among statutory offices:**

I strongly believe that physical space and administrative functions should be shared among statutory offices. For example, as per the [2021-2022 annual report from the Information and Privacy Commissioner](#), among their 13 permanent positions is a Business Manager which has two Administrative Assistants reporting to the role, in addition to the 7 Access and Privacy Analysts, the Senior Access and Privacy Analyst, and the Director of Research and Quality Assurance. I strongly believe this is one example of an area where all the statutory offices could and should share administrative support. The Child and Youth Advocate, as per their [2021-2022 Annual Report](#) also has 13 full time permanent positions, including an Executive Assistant to the Advocate. In the [2020-2021 report](#) there was an Administrative Officer role listed.

Hiring practices, role classification should be consistent between statutory offices and administrative resources shared. These should also be alignment with core government roles and compensation. Physical space should be shared to reduce taxpayer expenses on rent and costs on supplies such as copiers, printers and cleaning services.

I would also ask that the group consider expenses incurred by Statutory Offices on external legal advice, and as a result, whether it would appropriate to have shared legal support. I am aware that some of the Statutory Officers engage with external legal counsel for a range of issues, including interpretation of existing legislation. I am concerned that this becomes a significant expense for taxpayers.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer provides IT support and IT infrastructure for all statutory offices at no additional cost to the statutory offices. I strongly recommend that that practice continue as it offers value for taxpayers and is in alignment with providing IT support to outside organizations such as Legal Aid, the RNC and the Courts.

**5. Where reports from statutory offices should be directed, and whether any of the reports of the statutory offices should go to a standing or select committee of the House of Assembly:**

My feedback on this pertains to the existing processes and the lack of ability for appeal relating to investigations by statutory officers. I note in the Mitchelmore Report from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards in the Analysis section it says "The legislation does not provide for a right of appeal following the submission of the Citizens' Representative report".

I am concerned with each instance of investigation becoming its own report and being tabled in the House of Assembly for debate, even when there is no wrongdoing found. Considering there are no appeal mechanisms, it does introduce uncertainty and the potential for politically motivated accusations resulting in a named report being published (eg. The Stoodley Report) and put on the order paper. This process may discourage elected members from asking for clarifications.

I would recommend that there be an appeal mechanism, and that reports be reviewed by a committee of the House of Assembly prior to being referred to the House of Assembly.

Thank you very much for undertaking this very important review.

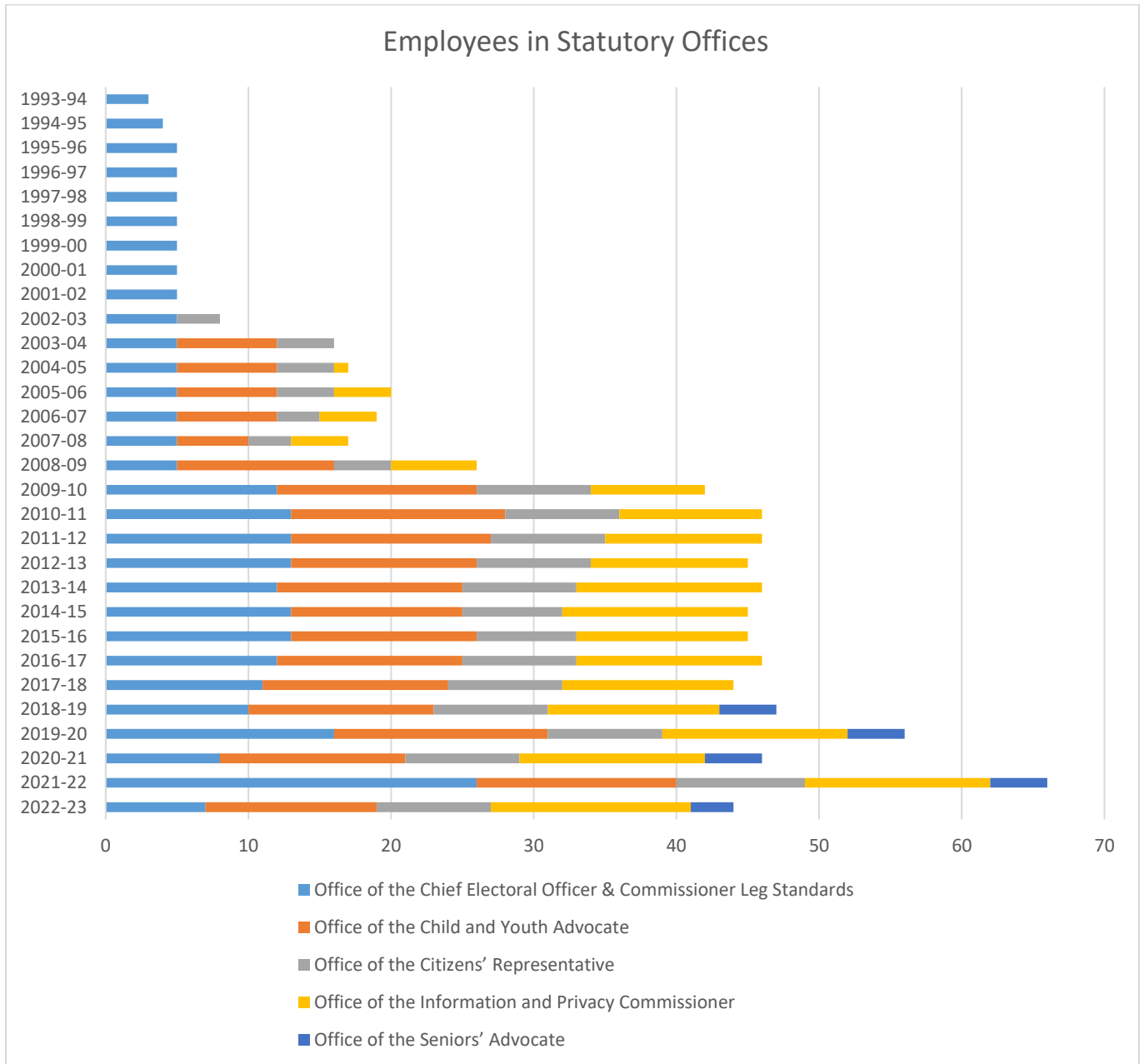
Sarah Stoodley

MHA Mount Scio

Minister of Digital Government and Service NL

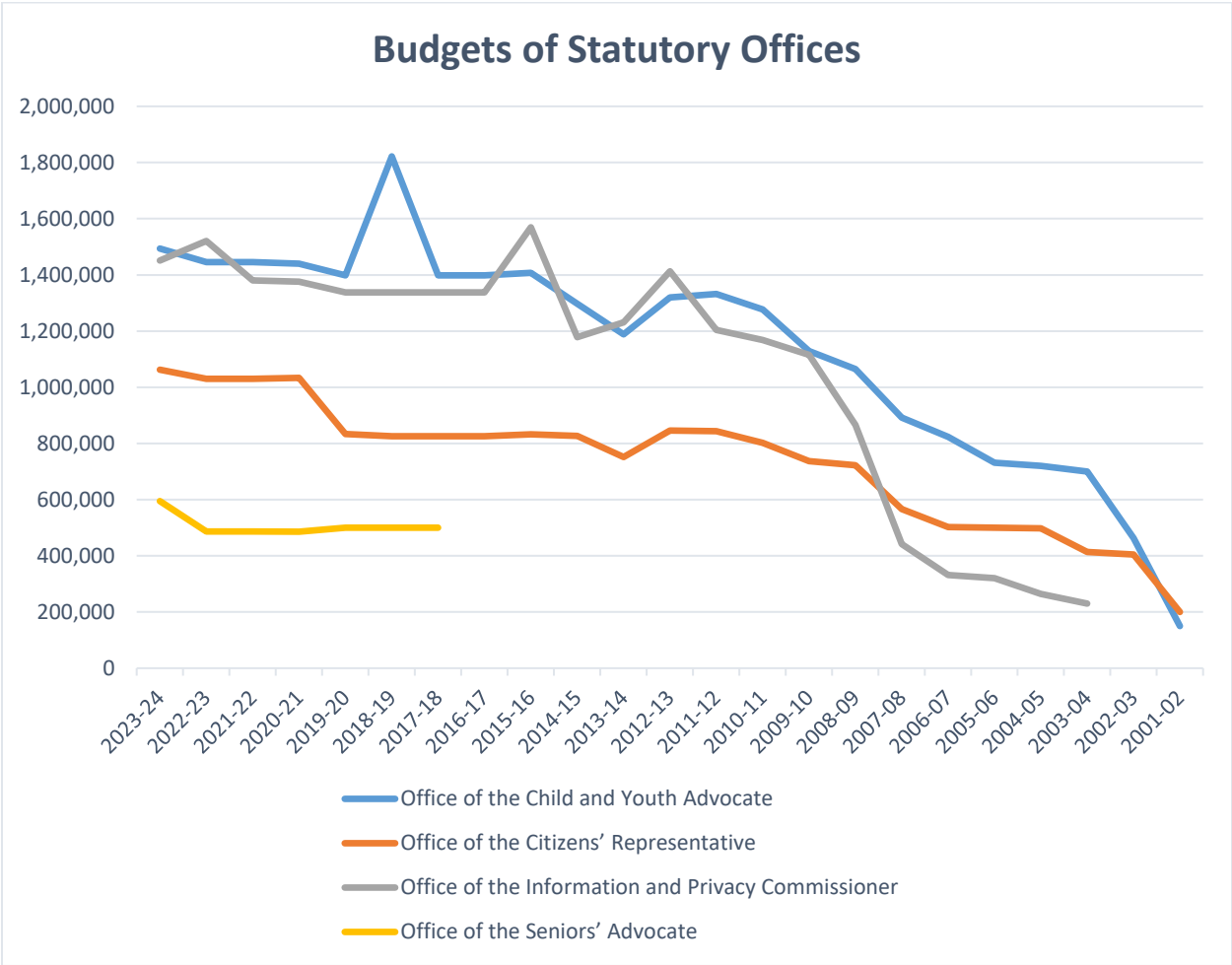
Minister responsible for the Office of the Chief Information Officer

## Appendix A



Data has been provided by the Legislative Library.

### Appendix B



Data has been provided by the Legislative Library.