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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Departmental staff in the Prairie Region provide legal advice to federal departments and agencies outside of Ottawa and are responsible for most of the Government's litigation work in the Prairies.

Between 2000 and 2002 the Department of Justice conducted two studies of administrative support functions and staffing levels. These studies contributed to a department-wide effort to examine ways of funding administrative services and providing regional managers with guidelines for planning appropriate resource levels. The Prairie Region was included within the scope of these studies.

With respect to the Prairie Region, the findings of the two studies were, in some cases, contradictory and the Region did not agree with some of the findings for staffing levels and organizational structure. The fieldwork for this audit was undertaken from September 2002 to December 2002 and covered assessment of activities in the Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Calgary offices as well as the provision of corporate services throughout the Prairie Region. The audit team considered the findings of the earlier reports and assessed the current effectiveness of the Prairie Region according to the scope and specific objectives outlined for this audit.

### **Organizational Structure**

The audit found that the structure of the management team was effective. The Prairie Management Team was meeting once a month and published a newsletter informing the regional staff of its activities, plans and decisions. In addition, the Prairie Management Team also established some major priorities for the Region in 2002–2003.

## **Planning**

Although Client Driven Services (CDS) agreements are good tools for facilitating planning with client departments, the audit team found that financial, casework, human resource, information technology (IT) and other business planning was not carried out on an ongoing basis with Prairie Region clients.

## **Financial Management**

The management of financial resources is a constant concern to regional management and financial officers. The financial framework currently in place at the Department of Justice is time consuming, requires continuous monitoring by regional financial officers, and is not very effective. The solutions to many of the financial issues identified in this audit are not exclusive to the Prairie Region and need to be addressed at the departmental level.

Specifically, the audit found that there are different approaches used by government departments in transferring funds to the Department of Justice. Therefore, the portfolios did not always receive adequate or timely funding. As well, the internal approach to distributing funding allocations to portfolios is time consuming and inconsistent among the portfolios. Together, these two issues significantly contribute to the deficit position experienced by the Region year after year. As of September 2002, the region had a forecasted deficit of \$3.2 million in salaries and approximately \$1 million in O&M.

## **Human Resources**

At the time of the audit, there were Human Resources (HR) staff located in the Saskatoon and Winnipeg offices who did not report to the regional Director of Human Resource Services (HRS). Focus group discussion and individual interviews revealed that conflicts have occasionally arisen around local versus regional HR roles and responsibilities. Reporting relationships should be clearly stated and accountabilities (roles and responsibilities) should be defined.

The audit team was told that the Regional Director of HRS does not attend meetings of the national HR directors. This can result in the Region not being totally informed on all HR matters. We found that HR in national headquarters (NHQ) could provide more assistance to the Region.

The regional Director of HRS is currently in the process of developing service standards to help measure the performance of regional HR services. It is our view that this effort should promote good linkages and consistent service across the local offices.

The Northern Region does not have any HR function or budget and is serviced out of the Prairie Region even though the Prairie Region is not funded to provide needed HR services to the Northern Region. This puts a strain on Prairie Region HR functions and takes resources away from servicing the Prairies.

### **Support Staff**

Throughout this audit, one of the issues repeatedly raised by interviewees was the lack of support staff in the Prairie Region. We reviewed the information given to us by the regional Director of HRS to determine the ratio of support staff to lawyers and found that the Region appears to have a sufficient number of support staff. It is unclear to us why regional staff perceive that there is inadequate support staff to service the Region's needs. However, given the frequency and emphasis with which this issue was communicated to us, we believe the matter requires further investigation.

There is a need to address the varying degree of expertise of legal assistants. It is our opinion that this issue should be addressed by developing appropriate training plans. As well, NHQ is aware of the need for a review of paralegal positions.

### **Communications**

The three main offices in the region generate reports on any activities that may be made public or are considered high risk to regional staff or operations. We were told that in some cases, reports are going directly to the Senior Regional Director and are not first submitted to the regional communications advisor (RCA) for review. Due to the sensitive nature of some of these reports, and in an effort to reduce the risk of compromising regional confidentiality, we recommend giving the RCA access to electronic directories of other offices rather than advising for better e-mail communications.

We also found that more formal meetings are required between the RCA and the Senior Regional Director in order for the RCA to receive guidance and approval on sensitive matters and early warnings of high-risk cases throughout the Region.

### **Linkages**

The audit found that linkages between the Prairie regional offices and between the Region and NHQ were generally adequate, except as noted for HR and Communications. We also noted some required clarifications around library services and library staff roles and responsibilities.

### **Physical Space**

All of the main regional offices had some requirements for additional or adequate office space. We recommended that the Region work with PWGSC to secure adequate premises that better accommodate the regional office's needs for staff, workspace, storage, interview rooms, and boardrooms.

### **Workload/Caseload**

The audit reviewed departmental data and found that at the time of the audit, the Aboriginal Law Portfolio had the largest number of outstanding cases (8500) in the Region. Further analysis of information identified that the Saskatoon office had the largest number of cases per lawyer (153). We recommended a review of the workload in all the offices to ensure a reasonable distribution of cases per lawyer.

Our analysis of data also found some significant increases in the number of opened cases between 2000 and 2002. However, we were unable to determine or confirm whether all the increases or decreases were in fact due to workload changes or due to incomplete or out-of-date data collected in Caseview (an information management software program). We were told that the Region is in the process of updating its Caseview data, which is key to projecting and planning the region's resource needs with respect to casework.

Finally, we identified the need to allocate the responsibility for classification actions to more than two HR staff. Allocating broader responsibility for this function should provide a more equitable distribution of work.

### **Corporate Service Staffing Levels**

The Prairie Region needs to be supported by strong corporate support services that can assist in the efficient delivery of legal services to departmental and governmental demands. The audit team examined reports from two studies conducted on administrative services and on benchmarks for service delivery standards. We then examined the organizational structure and delivery of the Region's corporate services and found that service standards need to be developed. The Region should conduct a review of its organizational structure for the provision of corporate support services. The review should have as an objective the streamlining of the Region's organizational structure for support services and should therefore pay particular attention to both the segregation and/or duplication in the delivery of corporate services and the consistency of regional structures and reporting relationships.

One of the earlier studies recommended an organizational framework for the Region that regional management did not agree with. After examining the proposed framework and the current Prairie Region operations, we agreed with regional management. In response to the Region's request that we recommend an appropriate framework, this audit report presents an organizational model based on partially decentralized corporate support services. Such a model will ensure that the Senior Regional Director has a corporate support unit, which would meet regional and corporate requirements including planning and coordination, and will ensure consistency of approach throughout the Region. In this model, core services will be provided at the local level. The benefits to adopting this model include the provision of specialized services in a more cost-effective manner and that regional directors can concentrate more on law-related activities.

Using benchmarks identified by the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) or specialty organizations, we further examined regional staffing ratios. Existing regional staffing ratios were compared to the suggested benchmark ratios.

- Finance and administration—the complexity of the current organizational structures in the different local offices and the lack of consistency in the Region's roles and responsibilities did not allow us to recommend staffing ratios that could be adopted by the Region. Instead

we recommended a review of how financial and corporate activities are structured and performed before adopting a staffing ratio that is relevant to regional needs.

- IT—an appropriate staffing ratio was identified and the Region was advised to distribute staff according to the needs of each office.
- Regional law libraries—the Region should use a ratio closer to that recommended by the 1996 report of the National Core Library Statistics Program (a report on private and government legal libraries).
- HR—an HR needs assessment should be conducted to determine the appropriate staffing ratios for each office in the Region. A follow-up action plan must be developed to address the regional needs identified by the assessment.

Overall, the audit team found the staff and management of the Prairie Region to be extremely dedicated to their jobs and to serving their clients. The Prairie Region is effectively organized to deliver its services. Most linkages between local offices and linkages between the Region and NHQ were appropriate and the management team structure is effective for the Region. Notably, the provision of corporate services to local offices could be improved.

***The management response to the recommendations contained in this report was provided by the Senior Regional Director, Prairie Region, on November 28, 2003.***



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

To improve its efficiency and to concentrate further on its service to the government and to Canadians, the Department of Justice is undergoing a substantial organizational change. A new senior management structure has been created to improve accountability and decision-making processes. The Department's presence in regions across Canada is also being strengthened to bring some of the programs and services closer to the client organizations (governmental) and to Canadians in all provincial/territorial communities. The Department's regional offices will also become more involved in the Government's justice policy agenda.

Departmental staff in the Prairie Region provide legal advice to federal departments and agencies outside of Ottawa, and are responsible for most of the Government's litigation work in the Prairies.

In the fiscal year 2000–2001 the Department of Justice wanted to determine ways of funding administrative services and providing regional managers with guidelines for planning appropriate resource levels. Therefore, the Business Management Board and the Law Practice Management Directorate of the Legal Operations Sector contracted Consulting and Audit Canada (CAC) to conduct a study of administrative support functions within the Department's regional offices. The study consisted of reviewing documents, job descriptions, comparing administrative structure and resource levels with other federal public service organizations, and interviewing selected staff. The administrative services review included human resources, finance, information management and information technology (IT), facilities management, communications, and certain functions of the senior regional directors. The Prairie Region was included in the scope of the study along with the Atlantic Region, Ontario Region, and the British Columbia/Yukon Region.

The Prairie Region did not agree with some of CAC's study findings with respect to staffing levels. In May/June 2002, Corporate Services in national headquarters (NHQ) asked an independent IT services firm, to review best practices of other government departments of similar size and scope and establish key benchmarks to be used as service delivery standards for the Department of Justice. The conclusions and recommendations of both studies were, in some

cases, contradictory. This audit considered the findings of the earlier reports and assessed the current effectiveness of the Prairie Region according to the scope and specific objectives outlined for this audit.

## **1.1 Objectives and Scope**

The objectives of this audit were to review and assess:

- the extent to which the Prairie Region is effectively organized to deliver its services;
- the appropriateness of the linkages between the local offices that make up the Prairie Region;
- the appropriateness of the linkages between the Prairie Region and Headquarters;
- the extent to which the management team structure is efficient and effective;
- the adequacy and effectiveness of the provision of corporate services to the local offices.

The audit covered all of the activities pertaining to the Prairie Region, including the three local offices in Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and the sub-office in Calgary. The following specific issues were examined:

- the application of the CAC report to the Region;
- the organizational structure for corporate services in the Region;
- the appropriate staffing and funding levels for corporate support to ensure the adequacy; and effectiveness of the provision of corporate services to the local offices in the Region.

The fieldwork for this audit occurred between September 2002 and December 2002.

## **1.2 Methodology**

The following people were interviewed:

- Senior Regional Director, Prairie Region;
- Regional Director, Alberta Region (Calgary and Edmonton offices);
- Regional Director, Saskatoon;
- Regional Director, Winnipeg;
- portfolio and group heads, legal areas;
- manager of operations, Calgary office;

- heads of corporate services, including finance and administration, human resources (HR), information management, and communications;
- Prairie Region staff in local offices;
- Department of Justice staff at national headquarters (NHQ);
- client department staff.

The audit team held focus groups with different Prairie Region staff. There was one focus group for corporate services staff, one focus group for lawyers, and one focus group for support staff. The objectives of the focus group were to discuss:

- the linkages between the different groups and the offices;
- the linkages between the Prairie Region and NHQ;
- the management framework and structure;
- the effectiveness of corporate services to the local offices, including whether the level of funding is adequate;
- the effectiveness of the Prairie Region organizational structure.



## 2. MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Organizational Structure

The Prairie Region comprises three local offices: Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg. A sub-office in Calgary reports to the Edmonton office. Staff providing corporate services support to all local offices in the Region share space with the Edmonton office. A Senior Regional Director based in Winnipeg heads the Prairie Region as it is now constituted. The regional corporate groups, which comprise finance, administration, communications, information management, and HR are located in Edmonton.

The organizational structure is hierarchical with the regional directors and other corporate service directors reporting to the Senior Regional Director.

The Prairie Region is structured along portfolio lines, which include tax law; civil litigation; business, regulatory, and immigration law; Central Agencies; federal prosecutions; and Aboriginal law.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of this audit, the Region had 558 employees distributed across four offices.

**Table 1: Distribution of Staff in the Prairie Region**

<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Calgary</b>	<b>Edmonton</b>	<b>Saskatoon</b>	<b>Winnipeg</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% Portfolio</b>
Aboriginal Law Services	13	81	53	24	171	30.6%
Administrative Services	3	0	22	19	44	7.9%
Communication	0	3	0	0	3	0.5%
Federal Prosecution Services	29	55	14	24	122	21.9%

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<sup>1</sup> At the Department of Justice, the term “portfolio” is mostly used to refer to legal areas, such as tax law, civil litigation, immigration law. For the purposes of this report, “portfolio” is used to refer to both legal subject areas and business lines (e.g. administrative services, general counsel, Central Agencies).

<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Calgary</b>	<b>Edmonton</b>	<b>Saskatoon</b>	<b>Winnipeg</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% Portfolio</b>
General Counsel	1	13	0	1	15	2.7%
Civil Litigation and Advisory Services	0	41	0	0	41	7.3%
Corporate Services <sup>2</sup>	0	16	0	0	16	2.9%
Human Resources	0	21	2	2	25	4.5%
Information Management Services	0	21	0	0	21	3.8%
Tax Law Services	0	40	5	16	61	10.9%
Business, Regulatory and Immigration Law	0	0	16	21	37	6.6%
Legal Operations	0	0	1	1	2	0.4%
<b>Total Per Office</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>558</b>	
<b>% Per Office</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>52.1%</b>	<b>20.3%</b>	<b>19.4%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The Prairie Management Team (PMT) addresses all major items concerning the Prairie Region such as strategic planning, staffing, and risk management. It consists of:

- the Senior Regional Director;
- the regional directors of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba;
- the regional Director of Human Resource Services;
- the regional Manager of Finance and Administration;
- the senior Regional Communications Advisor;
- the regional Director of Information Management Services.

The PMT meets once a month to discuss a range of regional issues. The team publishes a newsletter called “Update,” which informs regional staff of its activities, plans, and decisions.

Some of the major priorities that the PMT developed for the Region in 2002–2003 included:

- reducing the burden of the administrative and overhead activities of legal managers so that they can focus on issues of law and legal practice,
- managing growth in the Region,
- enhancing its leadership capacity and visibility in the Region,
- raising the priority of learning and developing legal excellence across the Region,

<sup>2</sup> This portfolio only lists the staff in the Edmonton office who provide corporate services to the whole Region. Other corporate service portfolios, such as Human Resources and Communication, Information Management Services, provide corporate services in local offices.

- improving the integration of legal services across the Region,
- defining and creating a “full Justice office” (providing all departmental services) in the Region.

Major activities have been developed and responsibilities assigned for meeting these priorities.

In addition to the PMT there are other committees that help integrate the work and priorities of the Region. These committees include:

- the Prairie Articling Committee, which consolidates the different approaches in recruiting law students into the Region’s articling program;
- the Prairie Recognition and Appreciation Committee, which ensures that legal excellence is recognized and rewarded on a regular basis;
- the Prairie Litigation Committee, which discusses litigation matters and consists of the chairs of each office’s Litigation Committee as well as the senior communications person;
- the Regional Intranet Committee, which meets on a regular basis to discuss ongoing issues such as resourcing and budgeting.

The committees were relatively new and appeared to be helping the linkages between local offices and portfolio’s in the Region.

In our opinion, the Region’s management team structure is effective.

## **2.2 Planning**

Planning is an essential function of management. It serves as a tool to ensure objectives are met and to identify issues, activities, and initiatives that will contribute to the achievement of these objectives. It is also the process by which managers identify priorities, an important aspect of managerial responsibilities especially in situations where resources are scarce.

The audit team found that financial planning, casework planning, HR planning, IT planning, and other business planning in the Prairie Region is not carried out on an on-going basis, either with clients or internally. While one of the key features of the Department’s Client Driven Services (CDS) process is joint planning with client departments and the identification of priorities, all services provided by the Prairie Region are not governed by CDS agreements.

As background, we note that in December 1999, the Department of Justice initiated a legal risk management project in order to address the extraordinary growth in volume, complexity, cost, and risk of civil litigation. The project's goal is to develop a sustainable approach to managing legal risks that protects the interest of the Crown and minimizes overall costs. Some identified impediments to managing legal risks are that:

- all departments do not take responsibility for legal risk,
- there is poor understanding of overall litigation and its drivers,
- the Department of Justice's policy development is not strong in the area of risk reduction,
- the Department does not have a system to anticipate legal threats.

The legal risk management project is ongoing. While identification of legal risks remains primarily the responsibility of client departments, the Department must play an important role in sensitizing client departments to the advantages of doing so and assisting them in integrating the identification of risks into their departmental management practices. It is our opinion that the Prairie Region could play an important role in this process by increasing its efforts in planning with its client departments. The Region could use planning exercises as opportunities to sensitize clients to the importance of integrating risk identification into their policy development process. It is our view that CDS agreements are good tools for facilitating regular planning with client departments. Further, it is our view that each of the functional/portfolio heads should be responsible for developing annual plans identifying their expected caseload/service delivery requirements and corresponding resource needs. These plans should be shared with client departments and reviewed by the Senior Regional Director.

Without conducting planning on a regular basis the Region is exposed to an increased risk of having insufficient resources available to undertake the required caseload work.

#### Recommendations and Management Response

- 1. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director ensure that the Prairie Region enhances its planning activities both internally and with client departments by directing portfolios to meet with their clients on a regular basis and to formally prepare plans identifying expected caseloads and resource requirements.**

The Region concurs that we must enhance our resource planning activities both internally and with client departments. As such, we are preparing an action plan that will ensure that the Region, in conjunction with the Portfolios, works closely with regional and national client



department officials to identify expected caseload and resource requirements. It is anticipated that this action plan will be tabled at a Prairie Management Meeting during the winter of 2003/04 and that a pilot program will be operational before the end of the current fiscal period.

## **2.3 Financial Management**

As of January 31, 2002, the O&M (operations and maintenance) budget for the Prairie Region was approximately \$4.1 million.

For several years now, financial resource management at the Department of Justice has been challenging, partly as a consequence of significant growth in areas such as Aboriginal law, charter rights and freedoms, and litigation. This growth has had a substantial impact on the workload in all departmental regional offices and the Prairie Region is no exception. To date, funding to support this growth has been more reactive than proactive and has not yet adequately provided for the increase in workload.

We examined the Prairie Region's budget and funding allocations, and we noted the types of financial difficulties faced by the region.

### **2.3.1 Financial Framework and Budget Allocation Model**

In February 2002, the Department introduced a new financial framework outlining a budget allocation model and process. The allocation model has three components:

- 1) Unfunded risk,
- 2) Other planned revenue sources,
- 3) Departmental A-base allocation.

While allocations in the past were limited to a distribution of the A-base, the 2002–2003 process included planned recoveries from client departments and the identification of risks for which no funding is available.

Early in the 2002–2003 fiscal year, the Department of Justice identified financial pressures in the order of \$48.8 million, 60 percent of which was in the salary budget for existing, indeterminate

employees. In order to address these financial pressures, the Department adopted a plan that included measures such as cuts to O&M budgets, a staffing freeze, and maximizing cost recoveries. Such measures expose the Region to the risk of not being able to deliver an acceptable level of legal services.

The Department also established resource reviews of such areas as departmental overhead, selected program areas, and costs related to the new financial framework. The main objective of these reviews is to identify areas where revenues could be increased and savings could be reached in order to find solutions to financial pressures and managing growth, which have plagued the Department for several years now.

In the course of our audit, several financial issues were identified. The most important ones are:

- funding allocations to portfolios, including recoveries;
- fund transfers.

#### Funding Allocations to Portfolios

The Prairie Region receives funding from eight different portfolios:

1. Tax Law Services,
2. Federal Prosecution Service,
3. Business and Regulatory Law,
4. Citizenship and Immigration,
5. Central Agencies,
6. Administration,
7. Justice,
8. Aboriginal Affairs.

Funds are also provided for special initiatives such as the Tobacco Control Fund and the Drug Prosecution Fund. Each of the NHQ portfolio heads have a different approach for allocating funds to the Prairie Region budget and for reporting results to senior management and Parliament. We were told that this system of allocating funds is time consuming, requiring a high level of effort from regional portfolio heads and regional financial officers.

Portfolio's in the region do not receive their A-base funding until after the fiscal year begins. Each portfolio receives it's A-base funding directly from the Finance, Administration and

Programs Directorate at NHQ and it is not received until the year is already in progress. Each portfolio receives its A-base allocations at different times. Client funding is also received in NHQ and allocated to each region. Those portfolios receiving client funding receive it from appropriate business managers in NHQ and, again, each portfolio receives its client funding at different times.

This method of allocating funding has resulted in the region being in a deficit position, year after year. The forecasted O&M deficit as of September 15, 2002 was \$503,796. Add to this a \$504,000 deficit for the Drug Prosecution Fund and a small \$290 deficit for Litigation and this amounts to more than a \$1 million deficit. Portfolio salary deficits as of September 15, 2002 were expected to be:

• Tax Law Services	\$633,629
• Federal Prosecution Services	\$377,849
• Aboriginal Law Services	\$978,358
• Central Agencies	\$6,042
• Administration	\$1,360,712
<b>Total salary deficit</b>	<b>\$3,252,493<sup>3</sup></b>

Operating in a deficit position leaves the region in a position of not knowing whether it will be able to pay for its financial liabilities in salaries and O&M.

Recoveries are another aspect of funding allocations to portfolios. Some portfolios operate on a cost-recovery basis. The recovery process is often governed by a CDS agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the client department and agreement conditions vary according to the client. All recovery documents are prepared in the Region and processed from NHQ.

Each portfolio uses a different model to recover funds. Some portfolios include support/overhead in their recovery costs and others base recovery cost only on the time spent by lawyers on a file. Most managers interviewed are of the opinion that recovery costs are too low and that, consequently, this is the reason why the Department is often in a deficit position.

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<sup>3</sup>The total salary deficit is \$3,356,590, however, we have subtracted salary surpluses (Drug fund, \$5,418 and Immigration, \$98,678) to achieve the final number of \$3,252,493.

We were informed that the current recovery models are too complex and are presently being revised by the Business Manager in the Finance, Administration and Programs Directorate at NHQ. Therefore, we make no recommendation at this time.

### Fund Transfers

When initiating new policies or programs, more and more client departments are now including the costs related to legal services in their Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) submissions. However, the approaches used by departments to transfer funds to the Department of Justice are not consistent. Some departments will keep funds approved by TBS in their A-base while others will transfer these funds to the Department of Justice. We were told that when departments retain the funds in their A-base, they don't always transfer the funds to the Department of Justice. This has meant that the Prairie Region does not always receive adequate or timely funding from client sources for the legal services it provides. If all client departments used the same approach such as the direct transfer of TBS-approved funds to the Department of Justice, this would reduce the risk of the Region and other parts of the Department operating with deficits.

### Conclusion

The management of financial resources in the Prairie Region is a constant concern to regional management and financial officers. The financial framework currently in place at the Department of Justice is very time consuming, requires continuous monitoring by regional financial officers, and is not very effective. The solutions to many of the financial issues identified in this audit are not exclusive to the Prairie Region and need to be addressed at the departmental level.

### Recommendations and Management Response

- 2. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director request that the Deputy Minister require that each NHQ portfolio allocate funding in a consistent manner to the Prairie Region budget.**
  
- 3. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director raise with the Deputy Minister ways of exploring how the Department can work with client departments to arrange the direct transfer of TBS-approved funds to the Department of Justice.**

(2 & 3) The Region concurs that the mechanisms for client funding through the portfolio system need improvement. However, this must be resolved and implemented on a

departmental-wide basis. The Senior Regional Director agrees to work with her counterparts to improve the allocation and distribution of funds to regional offices on a departmental-wide basis.

## **2.4 Human Resources**

The regional Director of Human Resource Services (HRS) is located in the Edmonton office.

Currently, there are HR staff located in the Saskatoon and Winnipeg office who do not report to the regional Director of HRS. The HR advisor located in the Saskatoon office reports directly to the Saskatchewan regional Director and a HR advisor has recently been hired in the Winnipeg office who reports directly to the local office manager.

Focus group discussion and individual interviews revealed that conflicts have occasionally arisen around local versus regional HR roles and responsibilities. Local staff are sometimes unsure of whether to address HR issues to regional or local HR staff. It is our opinion that HR advisors not reporting to the regional Director of HRS presents a risk of confusion concerning the relationship/authorities of HR throughout the Region. Reporting relationships should be clearly stated and accountabilities (roles and responsibilities) should be defined.

The regional Director of HRS is currently in the process of developing service standards to measure the performance of regional HR services. It is our view that this effort should promote good linkages and consistent service across the local offices.

There are monthly regional meetings for Prairie Region HR staff and a monthly conference call for national HR managers. There are no regular meetings or calls between regional HR and HR in NHQ.

The regional Director of HRS indicated to us that HR in NHQ could provide more assistance to the Region. We were told that the Region has not attended meetings of the national HR directors. This results in the Region not being totally informed on all HR matters. The audit team is of the view that regular meetings and/or conference calls would help to improve information sharing between the Region and NHQ. As well, the reporting of regional issues to HR at NHQ would help to improve communication between both groups.

The Northern Region does not have any HR function or budget and is therefore serviced out of the Prairie Region. The Prairie Region is not funded to provide the service to the Northern Region but continues to do so. In focus groups and individual interviews staff reported to us that this puts a strain on the Prairie Region HR function and takes resources away from servicing the Prairies (e.g. HR staff occasionally travel to the Northern Region).

#### Recommendations and Management Response

- 4. It is recommended that the regional Director of HRS document the roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships of the HR staff throughout the Region and ensure that HR roles and responsibilities are approved by the Senior Regional Director and distributed to all senior managers in the Region.**

The Region concurs with this recommendation. The regional Director of HRS has initiated a complete reorganization of HRS to meet the operational and strategic requirements of the Prairie Region and the Department. The SRD has approved the current and future HR organizational structures to enhance a pan-regional approach towards supporting the strategic goals and objectives of the Region.

- 5. It is recommended that the regional Director, HRS, attend the meetings of the national HR Directors.**

This recommendation is accepted. The Director, HRS has already met with the Directors of HR in NHQ to develop the rapport between NHQ and the Region. National teleconferences between the Directors of HR and NHQ have since been established on a monthly basis. Additionally, an annual conference for the Directors of HR has been planned that the Director will attend.

- 6. It is recommended that the regional Director of HRS identify issues between the Region and NHQ and bring these issues to the attention of the Senior Regional Director and the Director General of HR in NHQ.**

This recommendation is accepted and already implemented. The Director, Human Resources (HR) – Prairie Region met with the Senior Regional Director (SRD) – Prairie Region to identify and discuss issues between the Region and National Headquarters (NHQ). Subsequently, the Director, HR – Prairie Region met with the Director General of HR in NHQ to re-enforce the requirement for continual communication between the Regions and

NHQ to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. This partnership ensures the alignment of Regional strategic goals and objectives to the strategic goals and objectives of the Department.

- 7. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director, in conjunction with the Northern Region Senior Regional Director, assess the HR requirements for the Northern Region and ensure appropriate resources are allocated to the Prairie Region, without affecting Prairie Region services.**

Regional HRS will continue to provide the existing HR management support services through the ongoing transition period. Once the appointments of both the Senior Regional Director and Human Resources Director have been made in the Northern Region, Senior Management will re-examine the ability to establish an independent Corporate infrastructure for the Office of the North.

## 2.5 Support Staff

Throughout this audit, one of the issues repeatedly raised by interviewees was the lack of support staff in the Prairie Region. It is clear that, based on the two studies recently undertaken by the Department of Justice, this issue affects administrative support services throughout the Department. From the information gathered in these two reports staffing in the Prairie Region is above average for some support services and below average for other support services.

In order to confirm the comments we received about the lack of support staff in the Prairie Region, we reviewed the information given to us by the regional Director of HRS to determine the ratio of support staff to lawyers. We actually found that the region appears to have a sufficient number of support staff.

**Table 2: Support Staff Per Lawyer By Portfolio for Each Office**

Portfolio	Calgary	Edmonton	Saskatoon <sup>4</sup>	Winnipeg <sup>5</sup>
Aboriginal Law Services	3:10	34:47	4:7	6:18
Federal Prosecution Services	13:16	24:31	6:8	7:17

<sup>4</sup> Saskatoon had two PEs in HR. Since these two staff serviced only the Saskatoon office, we considered them to be local support rather than regional/corporate support. Therefore we have included the two PEs in our count as support.

<sup>5</sup> Winnipeg also had two PEs staff in HR. We treated them the same way as for Saskatoon.

<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Calgary</b>	<b>Edmonton</b>	<b>Saskatoon<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Winnipeg<sup>5</sup></b>
General Counsel	1:0	10:3	N/A	0:1
Civil Litigation and Advisory Services	N/A	19:22	N/A	N/A
Tax Law Services	N/A	13:27	2:3	5:11
Indian Reservation Services	N/A	N/A	20:22	N/A
Business, Regulatory and Immigration Law Services	N/A	N/A	6:10	5:16
Administration	3:0	N/A	22:0	19:0
Legal Operations	N/A	N/A	0:1	0:1
Local Human Resources	N/A	N/A	2:0	2:0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>20:26</b>	<b>100:130</b>	<b>62:51</b>	<b>44:64</b>

\* N/A = Not Applicable

Based on our analysis there is approximately .8 support staff per lawyer in the Prairie Region.

- Calgary and Edmonton have approximately .8 support staff for each lawyer,
- Saskatoon has approximately 1.2 support staff for each lawyer,
- Winnipeg has approximately .7 support staff for each lawyer.

It is unclear to the audit team why regional staff perceive that there is inadequate support staff to service the regions needs. However, given the frequency and emphasis with which this issue was communicated to us, we believe the matter requires further investigation.

### Recommendations and Management Response

#### **8. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director conduct a review of the support staff levels for the region.**

This recommendation is accepted. The SRD will conduct a review to verify the current support staff levels across the Region and to compare those ratios to other regional offices.

#### **2.5.1 Reclassification of Legal Support Staff**

As a result of grievances lodged by legal secretaries on their classification level, the Department of Justice initiated a study in 2001–2002 to develop model position descriptions for this category



of employees.<sup>6</sup> The study affected approximately 800 positions and addressed issues such as the lack of clarification between legal and non-legal secretaries, and the assignment of tasks according to the requirements of the position as opposed to the experience of the incumbent. In December 2001, a decision was made to reclassify legal secretaries at the CR-5 level and to rename this category to legal assistants.

In interviews staff indicated that both legal and non-legal secretaries (different classifications) were performing the same tasks. Further, in the course of our interviews and focus group sessions, the issue of how this reclassification affected paralegals was raised. Concerns were expressed on the need to clarify roles and responsibilities between the two groups (legal assistants and paralegals) and on the impact of the CR-5 salary levels on SI-1, SI-2 (paralegal) positions. Some comments were also made relative to the varying degree of expertise of legal assistants—that is, it was thought that some incumbents are performing at the level while others are not. It is our opinion that this issue should be addressed by identifying the gap between the requirements of the position and the employee’s capabilities, and developing training plans accordingly.

We contacted the Classification and Organization Design unit of the Human Resources Directorate at NHQ and communicated the concerns raised in the Region. We were informed that NHQ is aware of the situation and that a complete review of paralegal positions is planned for the near future.

### Recommendations and Management Response

- 9. It is recommended that Senior Regional Director remind regional managers of the need to develop training plans for legal assistants to ensure they receive appropriate training to maintain and update their skills.**

This recommendation is already implemented. Individualized learning plans exist across the Region for all employees, including legal assistants. Further, we are negotiating with NHQ for the delivery of specially designed courses for legal assistants, as well as developing our own courses to ensure useful and focused learning opportunities are available.

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<sup>6</sup> The last review was conducted in 1990, when the classification level of legal secretaries was raised from SCY-2 to SCY-3.

**10. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director request that HR at NHQ proceed with the review of paralegal positions as soon as possible.**

The Prairie Management Team (PMT) initiated a Paralegal Study which is approaching its final phase. Model work descriptions have been developed to reflect the common activities of positions currently classified as Paralegals. These model work descriptions will be distributed to the Regional Directors, Legal Directors and managers for their review and comment to HR by end of calendar year. The model work descriptions will then be forwarded by Corporate Classification to the National Paralegal Committee (NPC) and the Union – Canadian Association of Professional Employees. The NPC will be coordinating the feedback from the Paralegal community through regional representatives.

An interdepartmental Classification Committee is scheduled to meet 12 January 2004 to classify the model work descriptions. Once the work descriptions have been classified, the implementation phase will begin.

## **2.6 Communications**

The regional communications advisor (RCA) is located in the Edmonton office. This person reports directly to the Senior Regional Director located in Winnipeg. The RCA provides strategic communications planning and advisory services on verbal or written communications. The RCA also provides advice on the application of the Government of Canada's communications policy.

The RCA is responsible for:

- providing strategic advice, products and services to regional management on internal communications and media relations,
- alerting regional management of potential/emerging communications issues and coordinating early warning notices to Headquarters,
- liaising with Communications Branch on key communications issues,
- training and preparing regional media spokespersons,
- liaising with key media,
- providing communications support for ministerial events in the region.

Due to the geographic dispersion of the Prairie offices, the RCA has had to delegate lawyers in each office to respond to media inquiries in those cities.

The three main offices in the region generate reports on any activities that may be made public or are considered high risk to regional staff or operations. The RCA has developed a briefing and approval process for the Prairie Region describing the key tools used to brief the Minister and Deputy Minister. These tools include early warning reports, question period notes, and briefing notes to the national litigation committee. Also, in high profile cases, counsel develops, in consultation with communications staff, a communications plan identifying the media spokespeople and specifies media lines, questions, and answers.

We were told that in some cases, reports are going directly to the Senior Regional Director and are not first submitted for RCA review. The RCA must be able to read such reports. Since the RCA only has access to the electronic directories of the Edmonton office, there is a delay in his/her ability to read reports. Currently, reports have to be sent by fax or e-mail. This exposes the Region to the risk of having the RCA unfamiliar with information concerning the Region and therefore increases the risk of the Region speaking with more than one voice. Due to the sensitive nature of some of these reports, the audit team is of the opinion that there is security risk involved in sending confidential reports through e-mail. Therefore, giving the RCA access to electronic directories of other offices would provide faster access and reduce the risk of compromising regional confidentiality.

There is a formal one hour meeting once a month between the Senior Regional Director and the RCA. They also communicate on an as-required basis. It is our opinion that a formal meeting once a month is insufficient to have the RCA receive guidance and approval on sensitive matters and early warnings of high risk cases throughout the Region.

As noted here, communications linkages between regional offices in the Prairies needed to be strengthened. We are not informed of any significant linkage issues between NHQ and the RCA.

#### Recommendations and Management Response

**11. It is recommended that Senior Regional Director ensure that reports dealing with issues of sensitive, high risk and/or high visibility are reviewed by the RCA prior to reports being approved by the Senior Regional Director.**

This is already implemented. As part of its Regional Issues Management Process, the Regional Communications Director receives key regional briefing reports at the same time as or prior to their approval by or on behalf of the Senior Regional Director.

**12. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director request that IMB at NHQ provide the Prairie Region RCA with direct access to relevant electronic directories of other Prairie Region offices.**

The implementation of iCase will address this. In the interim, the Regional Issues Management Process now equips the Regional Communications Director with access to needed information.

**13. It is recommended that the RCA and Senior Regional Director formally meet at least twice a month to discuss all items related to Communications.**

This is done now. The Senior Regional Director and Regional Communications Director hold one-on-one meetings in person or by phone at least twice monthly.

## **2.7 Information Management Services**

The Director, Information Management Services, located in Edmonton, is the functional authority for all regional information management and technology (IM/IT) activities in the Region. The Director reports directly to the Senior Regional Director and is a member of the PMT.

All regional informatics (IT) staff in all four Prairie offices report directly to the IMS Director. In Edmonton, the library and information management (IM) staff report to the Director. For the other three offices, the IMS Director has functional responsibility for the library and information management but these services report directly to the respective office managers. In addition, both the IMS librarian and Information Holdings manager in Edmonton have regional roles providing functional leadership and guidance to the library and records services staff in the other Prairie offices.

Prairie Region IT staff also support staff of the National Crime Prevention Centre located in the three Prairie provinces.

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<sup>7</sup> Caseview is an information management software program for managing legal cases.

In all offices, IT staff provide technical support to Justice staff in multiple office sites; currently staff are located in a total of 12 buildings. IM staff in Edmonton also maintain records facilities in two sites. Regional linkages are maintained through monthly office visits by the Director and regular telephone conference calls. Face-to-face meetings are held at least two to three times per year.

As the national level, the Director is a member of the National Informatics Committee (NIC). The NIC is chaired by the CIO (Director General, Information Management Branch) and meets at least twice per year. The IMS Director also represents the Region on a variety of other IM/IT project and services committees and working groups.

There are also national forums for IT, IM and Library staff which have regular teleconferences and meet annually.

### **2.7.1 IT Roles and Responsibilities**

Local office responsibilities include maintenance of servers and local infrastructure. Regional users phone the national Helpdesk for support. If the Helpdesk cannot provide a solution within fifteen minutes then a trouble ticket is issued and the problem is referred to Prairie Region informatics who then refer it to the appropriate office IT group.

We reviewed the August 2002 IMS monthly regional status report and noticed that out of 191 calls from the Region to the national Helpdesk, 121 (63%) were referred back to Edmonton for support. These included work requests specific to Edmonton such as printer problems, workstation upgrading and administrative tasks (permissions, new accounts, adding an account to a group). We found no evidence of ineffective client service resulting from the referral of calls from the national Helpdesk to the Edmonton office.

We were told that the Edmonton law library receives calls from staff asking for instructions on how to use the Internet. Library staff are unsure of whether this type of call should be directed to the national Helpdesk or directly to local informatics staff. In the view of the audit team, responsibility for Internet-related questions should be addressed by the Helpdesk.

## Recommendations and Management Response

### **14. It is recommended that the Regional Director of IMS notify regional staff that all Internet-related queries should be referred to the national Helpdesk.**

Completed. All regional staff are now aware of the national Helpdesk.

## **2.8 Linkages**

Linkage is the ability of the Region to unite itself given the geographic dispersion of its offices and staff. Linkages involve the ability of the local offices, staff, and local and regional management to communicate within the Region and external to the Region.

Some of the linkage issues facing the Region include:

- geographic dispersion of offices,
- strengthening internal communications,
- communication with NHQ.

Based on the feedback we received from the focus group with lawyers, it is very rare that more than one office will be involved with a legal file. Communication between the portfolios in the various regional offices is usually through e-mails and conference calls. This works well.

Throughout this report we have integrated our findings on linkages within other discussions around portfolios/business lines. This section offers additional findings on linkages for a few more regional portfolios/business lines.

### **2.8.1 Policy and Integration**

In the Prairie Region, the Policy and Integration Section defines and develops regional policy capacity and provides liaison between the NHQ Policy Sector and the Prairie Region. It provides the PMT with policy information, analysis, and recommendations. Policy and Integration is responsible for ensuring effective linkages exist between the regional office and NHQ with respect to policy, program initiatives, and operations.

There is a monthly conference call between NHQ Policy Sector officials and the regional policy manager. In addition, the regional policy manager speaks with policy managers from other regions on an ongoing basis.

Policy and Integration is a new area within the Region. As at the time of the audit, linkages of Policy and Integration with other areas in the Region were adequate.

### **2.8.2 Financial Analysis**

Currently, all financial analysis is performed in the regional corporate service finance office (Edmonton). Management reports are prepared in the regional office and then provided to the appropriate senior managers in the other Prairie Region offices.

The regional manager of Corporate Services attends an annual national finance meeting. We found the linkages between the regional finance staff and between the regional staff and NHQ to be adequate.

### **2.8.3 Immigration Casework**

Immigration casework is performed in the Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Saskatoon offices. However, because there is insufficient immigration casework in the Region to support a formal portfolio, immigration casework is performed by lawyers within the Civil Litigation and Advisory Services portfolio.

Prairie Region civil litigation lawyers working on immigration cases communicate with each other by sending and receiving e-mails documenting immigration case summaries.

At the time of the audit, we were told that when the current departmental budget freeze is lifted, the Prairie Region may hire a senior counsel (LA-2B) to manage the immigration casework in the Region without replacing the existing organizational structure (meaning that the proposed immigration casework manager will be part of the civil litigation portfolio).

The immigration litigation coordinator located in NHQ interfaces directly with the specific Prairie Region (civil litigation) lawyers working on immigration cases. These Prairie Region

lawyers are members of the (national) Legal Issues Committee and are part of the bi-weekly calls between the NHQ immigration portfolio and immigration lawyers throughout the country.

The immigration business manager located in NHQ deals directly with the regional manager of Corporate Services on budgeting, financial, and administrative matters.

It is our opinion that the regional linkages and regional-national linkages in the immigration portfolio are effective.

#### **2.8.4 Libraries**

There are libraries in the Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg offices. Each office has a librarian and there is no formal interaction between them. The three librarians do contact one another as often as necessary. As well, the Edmonton law librarian provides assistance to the Calgary library.

There is some confusion among regional staff concerning the role of the law librarian in the Edmonton office. This person is sometimes called the regional librarian but, in fact, has no regional responsibility.

The law librarian from the Edmonton office attends a national librarians' meeting held twice a year in NHQ. Current plans call for trying to have this meeting on a quarterly basis.

Regional and national linkages within library services are adequate.

#### **Recommendations and Management Response**

##### **15. It is recommended that the Alberta Regional Director document and distribute the role and responsibilities of the Edmonton law librarian.**

Underway. The role and responsibilities of the Edmonton law librarian are under review. As part of this review, the librarian's regional responsibilities will be clarified.



### **2.8.5 Aboriginal Law Service, Calgary-Edmonton**

As noted previously, legal files are rarely shared between offices. However, the Aboriginal Law Service between Calgary and Edmonton is an exception. This section only describes the linkages between the Calgary and Edmonton Aboriginal Law Services.

There is a weekly conference call between the Calgary Aboriginal Law staff and the staff in the Edmonton Aboriginal Law portfolio. In addition, a senior counsel from the Edmonton office visits the Calgary office once a week in order to review files, manage the casework, and deal with issues.

Some files are split between the Edmonton and Calgary office with joint access to the files through Caseview (an electronic information management system for legal case files). The main paper files are kept in Edmonton. When Calgary requires access to paper files, then the paper documents are digitally scanned and made available through Caseview.

The Indian Residential School/Aboriginal Law portfolio has a monthly lawyer-only meeting across the country.

Calgary-Edmonton linkages for Aboriginal Law appear to be adequate.



### **3. PHYSICAL SPACE**

The Edmonton office occupies several floors of the Bank of Montreal building. There is currently insufficient space to provide for confidential interview rooms, board rooms and, most importantly, for the secured storage of client files. We found many offices with boxes of files situated unsecured on the floors, easily accessible to anyone.

There is insufficient space in the Edmonton office to accommodate a special room for assembling and repairing computers.

One year ago the Edmonton Aboriginal Law portfolio moved from the main regional office in the Bank of Montreal building into the Toronto Dominion Building. Before moving into the new office space they had already outgrown it. Public Works and Government Service's (PWGSC) initial planning for the move was based on existing staff and did not include any allowance for increases of staff.

Both the Winnipeg and Saskatoon offices also had issues concerning office space. In the Winnipeg office, PWGSC persuaded the Department to remain at their current location where renovations were recently completed. In retrospect, the Winnipeg office now believes that it was not a wise decision to remain in that location since expansion possibilities are quite limited. Growth has had an impact on the Saskatoon office, which moved into its new location in November 2001. Attempts are being made to secure additional space in the same building. In both cases, PWGSC allocated space according to the current FTEs and did not factor in future growth in the accommodation plan.

## Recommendations and Management Response

**16. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director request that PWGSC secure premises in Edmonton and all other locations that better accommodate the regional office's needs for staff, workspace, storage, interview rooms, and boardrooms.**

Due to its exponential growth (over 300 new FTEs in 5 years with more planned) the Region has been working closely over the past five years with Regional Public Works staff and with those responsible for accommodations in Justice headquarters. Overall, these working relationships have been collegial and the results fruitful. Both Justice and PWGSC are aware that we must work within the guidelines that have been established for our offices, and we have sought to find the best possible solutions within that framework. In line with recommendations in the audit, we have invited the Director, Facilities Management to meet with our Prairie Management Team to discuss issues around accommodation in the Region. Finally, we note that there was incorrect information in the narrative regarding the Winnipeg Office.

## **4. WORKLOAD/CASELOAD**

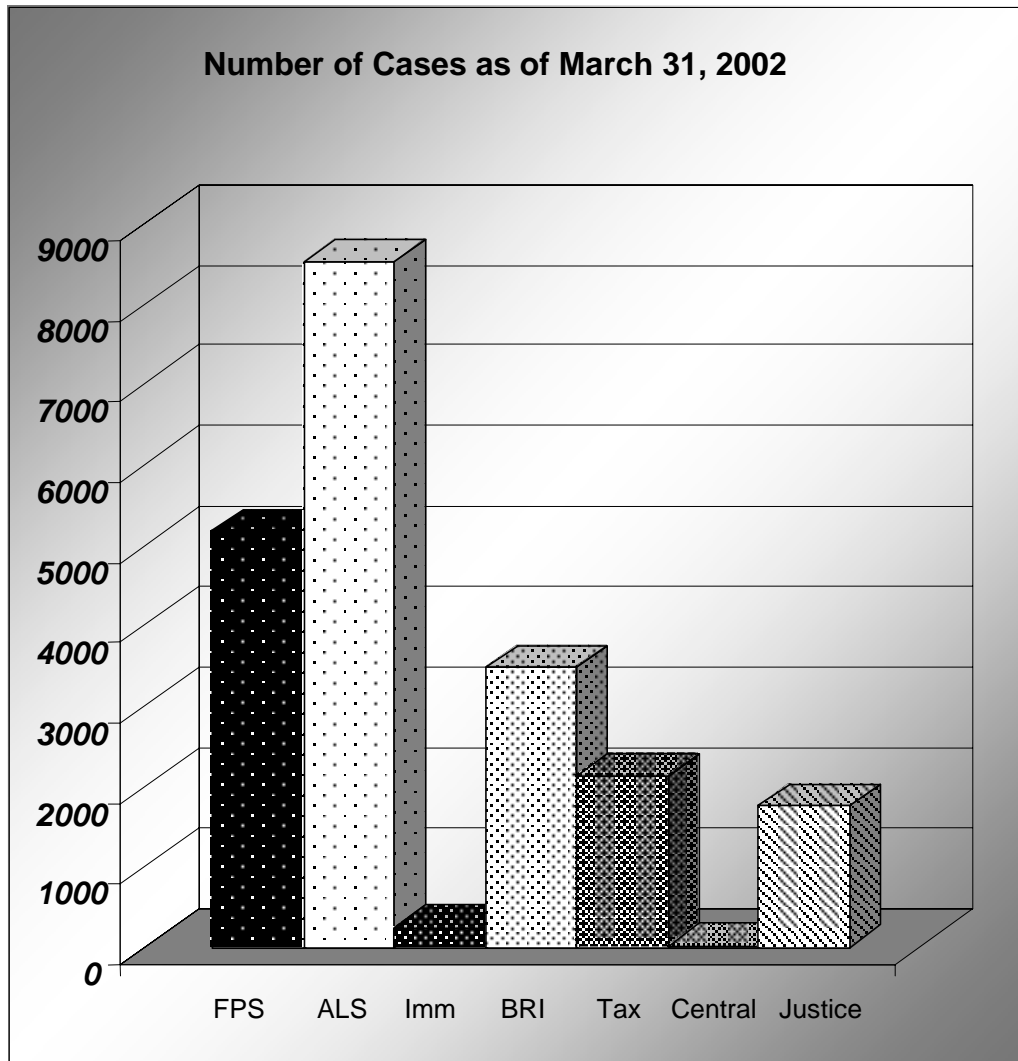
### **4.1 Legal Case Work**

By reviewing the information provided by the regional Director of HRS and the Caseview reports provided by each office we determined that:

- the Calgary office has a total of 26 lawyers with 1959 cases in its inventory, which is about 75 cases per lawyer;
- the Edmonton office has 130 lawyers working on 8820 cases, which is about 68 cases per lawyer.
- the Saskatoon office has 51 lawyers working on 7810 cases, which is about 153 cases per lawyer;
- the Winnipeg office has 64 lawyers working on 4702 cases, which is about 73 cases per lawyer.

Saskatoon has the largest number of cases per lawyer (153). According to the information in Caseview the largest portfolio in the Region is the Aboriginal Law portfolio with approximately 8500 cases outstanding. Figure 1 shows the case distribution by portfolio.

**Figure 1**



<b>Legend</b>	
FPS—Federal Prosecution Services	Tax—Tax Law Services
ALS—Aboriginal Law Services	Central—Central Agencies
Imm—Immigration	Justice—Department of Justice
BRI—Business, Regulatory, and Immigration	

\*Note: In the Prairie Region BRI is one portfolio. However, Immigration data are separately recorded in Caseview.

In focus groups and interviews, Prairie Region staff told us that they have experienced stresses related to workload. In our opinion, these reports and our analysis of the workload in the Saskatoon office exposes it to the risk of work-related problems (e.g. increased stress, accidental errors, incomplete work, and delayed cases) resulting from double the workload of all other offices in the Region.

## Recommendations and Management Response

### **17. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director and the regional directors of Alberta, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg review the workload in all the offices to ensure there is a more reasonable distribution of cases per lawyer.**

The Region concurs that there is an ongoing need to ensure that workload is equitably distributed to all lawyers. While the audit refers to the “number of files per lawyer” as an indicator of workload, we feel that the analysis is much more complex; there are several factors that determine the amount of energy that is required to complete a file. The Caseview system currently collects information that permits managers to carry out a rigorous workload analysis and the Region is currently preparing an action plan that will ensure that all workload is regularly analysed. It is anticipated that this plan will be in place by the end of the current fiscal period.

#### **4.1.1 Increases in Caseload**

According to Caseview, from 2000–2001 to 2001–2002 the number of cases of the Alberta Region grew by about 17 percent, the number of cases in the Saskatoon office grew by about 18 percent, and the number of cases in the Winnipeg office grew by about 9 percent. Table 3 provides a breakdown of outstanding cases by portfolio.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 3: Percentage Increase in Outstanding Cases From 2000 to 2002**

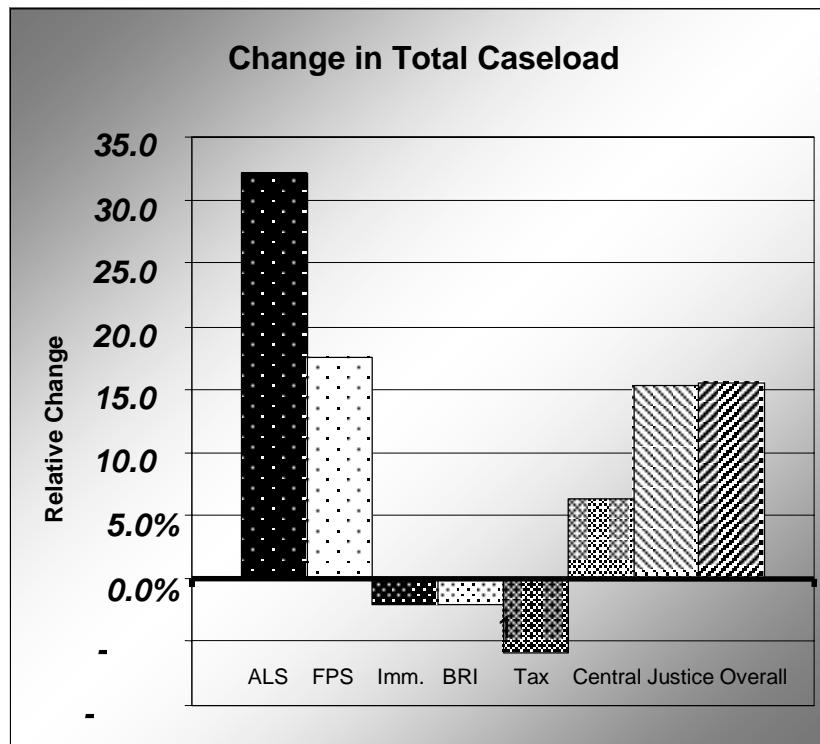
<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Calgary</b>	<b>Edmonton</b>	<b>Saskatoon</b>	<b>Winnipeg</b>
Federal Prosecution Services	42%	6%	25%	28%
Aboriginal Law Services	N/A	83%	15%	12%
Business, Regulatory, Immigration	N/A	-11%	56%	-10%
Central Agencies	N/A	17%	0%	N/A
Immigration	N/A	13%	-29%	-12%
Justice	N/A	29%	11%	N/A
Tax Law Services	N/A	2%	-14%	-12%

<sup>8</sup> Opened cases are defined as those opened in the current fiscal year. Outstanding cases were opened in previous years and casework is ongoing.

Overall, we calculated that there has been a 15 percent increase in the number of outstanding cases in the Region between 2000–2001 and 2001–2002.

From a regional perspective Figure 2 summarizes the increase by portfolio. This figure shows the change in total cases and was determined by calculating outstanding cases, adding new cases and subtracting closed cases.

**Figure 2**



Legend	
FPS—Federal Prosecution Services	Tax—Tax Law Services
ALS—Aboriginal Law Services	Central—Central Agencies
Imm.—Immigration	Justice—Department of Justice
BRI—Business, Regulatory, and Immigration	

\*Note: In the Prairie Region BRI is one portfolio. However, Immigration data are separately recorded in Caseview.

The number of opened cases between 2000–2001 and 2001–2002 increased in Edmonton by about 4 percent, in Saskatoon the number of opened cases increased by about 2 percent, and in Winnipeg the number of opened cases increased by about 5 percent.



We analyzed Caseview data and found some significant increases in the number of opened cases between 2000 and 2002. However, We were unable to determine or confirm whether all the increases or decreases were in fact due to workload changes or due to incomplete data in Caseview. We have been told that the Region is in the process of updating its Caseview data.

As noted earlier, in the section on “Planning” the Region does not have effective planning processes. Projecting human and fiscal resource needs to meet expected increases in workload requires accurate case data. It is clear to the audit team that up-to-date Caseview data is required to project and plan the Region’s resource needs with respect to casework.

#### Recommendations and Management Response

**18. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director set a target date for completing the update of Caseview data.**

Over the past year, the portfolios and the Legal Risk Management team in Headquarters have created standardized electronic audit reports. These reports have been designed to ensure that all mandatory data is included in the case management system and is monitored for accuracy. The audit reports have been delivered to the region and are now being regularly prepared by each office. Copies of the results are being supplied, not only to the regional offices, but also to the National Business Manager in Ottawa. The dual regional and national aspects of the audit ensure high levels of compliance. As a result of this new auditing procedure, the Region has completed updating the Caseview information.

**19. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director ensure that, once all the Caseview data has been updated, an analysis of the data is conducted to help in resource planning for the Region.**

The Region concurs that there is a strong corporate need to analyse Caseview data for resource allocation purposes. Accordingly, we are currently developing a business plan that will ensure this information will be reviewed regularly. At present, the reports necessary to effectively analyse workload have been created and are now available to regional managers. The four main reports are: Time billed to Client Departments, Time billed by Lawyer Classification, Open and Closed File Inventory Analysis, and Age of Inventory Analysis. It is anticipated that, by the end of the current fiscal period, a full analysis of this information will be regularly undertaken by managers at three levels: the operational unit; the Regional office; and the Region.

## 4.2 Administrative Workload

Approximately 95 percent of the 215 classification actions that were processed in the Prairie Region between April 1, 2002 and October 2, 2002 were processed by only two employees in HRS. The other 5 percent were processed by other regional HRS staff. We were told by several staff that the Region has an extremely slow turnaround time for classification actions. Having only two people work on classification actions exposes the Region to the risk of overloading the two employees and not providing for sufficient expertise in the event of one of the two employees leaving the Region.

### Recommendations and Management Response

**20. It is recommended that the Regional Director of HRS allocate the responsibility for classification actions to more than two HR staff to provide a more equitable distribution of work.**

The Regional Human Resources Section has established the Classification Unit to manage the Classification and Organizational Design function within Prairie Region. This Unit is comprised of the Regional Manager - Classification, 1 full-time Classification Advisor, 1 half-time Classification Advisor, and 1 full-time Classification Assistant.

## 5. CORPORATE SERVICE STAFFING LEVELS

This section provides our assessment of the findings of the studies referred to in the Introduction and further examines staffing levels in the Prairie Region.

Some of the issues for the Prairie Region documented in the CAC report, “Regional Administrative Services Review” included:

- significant growth in size due to catching up after years of budgetary constraints;
- under-resourced administrative functions caused by demand outpacing the capacity to deliver administrative services;
- certain administrative services are provided to the Northern Region from the Prairie Region;<sup>9</sup>
- coordination and communication between Edmonton and other Prairie Region offices was an ongoing challenge.

The CAC report concluded that the overall staffing level at the Edmonton office for HR, finance, IT, information management, general administration, business manager and Senior Regional Director was, at that time, 11.5 FTEs short of the proposed levels. However, staffing levels for the HR and IM functions were above recommended staffing levels. The report then went on to state that the staffing levels for virtually all administrative functions fell below the recommended levels of a proposed staffing template, except for IT in the Winnipeg office where the actual staffing levels were higher than the recommended levels. According to the study, the Region was understaffed by about 37.5 FTEs for administrative services.

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<sup>9</sup> In 1995 a departmental reorganization resulted in the creation of the Prairie/Northwest Territory Region. Then in 2001, the Northwest Territory and Nunavut offices were transferred to the newly created Northern Region, although some financial and human resource services continue to be provided by the Prairie Region.

The Region disagreed with the recommendations in the CAC report for many reasons including that:

- the CAC report recommended reducing the administrative support staff in Winnipeg and Saskatoon without a corresponding increase in the Edmonton regional office to offset the reduced services;
- the Region strongly believed that the level of support recommended by the CAC for the “satellite” offices (i.e. Winnipeg and Saskatoon) was inadequate.

The report prepared later by a private consulting firm (which had completed a second study) found that the “organizational design and reporting relationships between NHQ, regions, and portfolios promoted a level of increased corporate services support.” The report found that IT in the Prairie Region was about 27 percent understaffed. It used as its baseline a 2001 study published by the Gartner Group, a prominent research and advisory firm, which indicated that, worldwide, most government departments had a ratio of 1 IT staff for 23 regular staff.<sup>10</sup> This finding also contradicted the finding published in the CAC report which indicated that staffing levels are higher than those recommended by the CAC. At the time of the study there were a total of five IT staff in the Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and Calgary offices whereas the CAC recommended there only be three IT staff in those offices.

Both studies reported that the Prairie Region was overstaffed in the HR function. The private consulting firm used the TBS Shared Services Study as its guide. The TBS study cited a ratio of 1 HR FTE employee per 59 employees. The Prairie Region had 1 HR FTE employee per 35 employees.

We found the conclusions and recommendations of both studies to be confusing and, in some cases, contradictory. The audit scope identified three issues related to corporate services to be examined in the course of this audit: the application of the CAC report to the Region, the appropriate organizational structure for corporate support, and the appropriate level of funding for corporate support in the Region to ensure the adequacy and effectiveness of the provision of corporate services to the local offices in the Region.

In order to support some of our findings, the following chart represents the distribution of corporate support services in the Prairie Region as of October 2002.

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<sup>10</sup> *IT Spending and Staffing Survey Results*, Gartner Group, 2001. A survey of IT costs and activities of over 600 organizations worldwide including 61 governments and 2 law firms.

**Table 4: Corporate Service Staffing Ratios**

	<b>Edmonton</b>	<b>Winnipeg</b>	<b>Saskatoon</b>	<b>Calgary</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>558</b>
Finance and Administration	16	12	16	2	46
Employees/Finance Ratio	1:18	1:9	1:7	1:23	1:12
Information Technology	4	3	2	1	10
Employees/IT Ratio	1:73	1:36	1:56	1:46	1:56
Records Management	9	1	2	1	13
Employees/RM Ratio	1:32	1:108	1:57	1:46	1:43
Human Resources	21	2	2	0	25
Employee/HR Ratio	1:13	1:54	1:56	0	1:22
Library	3	1	1	0	5
Employees/Library Ratio	1.52 <sup>11</sup>	1:64 <sup>12</sup>	1:51 <sup>13</sup>	0	1:54 <sup>14</sup>
<b>Total Corporate Services (SC)</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Total Employees/CS Ratio</b>	<b>1:5</b>	<b>1:6</b>	<b>1:5</b>	<b>1:12</b>	<b>1:6</b>

Note: The CGI and the CAC reports did not provide staffing ratios for Records Management staff, nor did they refer to ratios provided by Treasury Board.

The CAC report proposed an organizational template as a guideline with recommended FTE numbers and classification levels for management support services within the regions. Among the assumptions that this template operated on was the fact that the “shared services” model active at that time in the Prairie Region did not work effectively because the demand from any one office is too great. The CAC report did indicate that the proposed template models did not necessarily meet the requirements of the Prairie Region, which operates differently than any other region. The Region looked at the CAC’s template models and then adopted a mix of them:

- Level 1 Office (core activities – satellite offices) for Calgary,
- Level 3 Office (regional office with a population of 101–200) for Saskatoon and Winnipeg,
- Level 6 Office (regional office with a population of 401–500) for Edmonton.

While some of the corporate service activities are now supported by staff in local offices, staff in Edmonton fill a triple role:

- they provide support at the regional level for certain types of services that have not been decentralized (e.g. classification, pay and benefits),

<sup>11</sup> This ratio is based on the number of lawyers in Edmonton (130) and Calgary (26) for a total of 156.

<sup>12</sup> This ratio is based on the number of lawyers in Winnipeg (64).

<sup>13</sup> This ratio is based on the number of lawyers in Saskatoon (51).

<sup>14</sup> This ratio is based on the number of lawyers (271) in the Prairie Region.

- they provide a corporate role in coordinating certain activities in support of the Senior Regional Director (e.g. budget reconciliation),
- they provide direct support to the Edmonton office and, to a certain extent, to the Calgary office.

We concur with the Prairie Region's assessment that the CAC proposal is not appropriate for the requirements of the Prairie Region.

## **5.1 Current Corporate Support Services**

### **5.1.1 At the Regional Level**

Currently, the corporate support services reporting to the Senior Regional Director for the Prairie Region include:

- the regional Director of HRS, who is responsible for all activities related to human resources;
- the Manager of Regional Corporate Services, whose responsibilities include financial management and administrative services (e.g. materiel and facility);
- the regional Director of IMS, who is responsible for information management and technology function including: information technology, information holdings (records and library);
- the regional communications advisor (RCA).

### **5.1.2 At the Local/Satellite Level**

In Winnipeg, corporate support services are provided by an office manager; Finance and Administration, which includes functions such as registry, reception, Caseview, library, IT, materiel management and accommodation; a HR advisor and a training and learning advisor. The incumbents of these positions report to the Regional Director.

In Saskatoon corporate support services are provided by an office manager, a computer systems administrator, a human resources advisor, and training and learning advisor. These positions report to the Saskatoon Regional Director.

For Calgary most of the corporate support services are provided by employees in the Edmonton office. However, some basic services are provided on-site and these are: general office clerk, records clerk/administrative assistant, office administrator/administrative assistant, informatics technician, Caseview administrator. These positions all report to the manager of the Calgary office.

### **5.1.3 Key Findings**

As manager of the Prairie Region, the Senior Regional Director needs to be supported by a strong and efficient corporate support services team for the management of the region and to respond to departmental and governmental requirements. In the course of our audit, we have identified areas that could benefit from some improvements. These are described below.

#### Service Standards

Local staff expressed concerns to us about the lack of expediency in the provision of regional corporate services. We were not able to determine whether this is the result of a lack of communication between the parties or of unrealistic expectations on the part of managers and employees or both. We were told by staff that this situation can result in unnecessary frustrations. Documenting and communicating service level standards for corporate services could help minimize the frustration and could clearly define service expectations.

#### Recommendations and Management Response

**21. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director of the Prairie Region develop service standards for the provision of corporate support services.**

Currently the Director, Human Resources, Prairie Region along with the HR Management Team are researching existing service standards for the provision of Corporate HR support services, both Departmentally and Inter-Departmentally. Concurrently, the Director of HR and the HR Management Team have restructured the HR Organization and are reviewing existing policies, practices and procedures in an effort to streamline HR service delivery. The review and analysis of this information will allow Regional HR Services to put systems and procedures in place that support the provision of a proactive and strategic HR service to a Region within a National framework.

## Reporting Relationships

Many regional staff, reporting to local or regional managers, share responsibilities for providing corporate support services. This increases the workload of supervisors who must ensure that the necessary links are established for support activities and initiatives impacting on more than one responsibility area.

There is a lack of consistency in the organizational structures of the different units providing corporate support services throughout the Region. For example:

- in Saskatoon the manager of Computer Services reports to the Regional Director, but in Winnipeg the same position reports to the office manager;
- Saskatoon Caseview coordinators/administrators report to the Regional Director whereas in Winnipeg these positions report to the office manager and in Edmonton these positions report to IMS or portfolio heads;
- more importantly, while the Regional Director in Edmonton is the manager for that office, none of the corporate support services report to that position.

A complex organizational structure makes it more difficult to achieve consistency. It is our opinion that the Region should conduct a review of its organizational structure for the provision of corporate support services. The review should have as an objective the streamlining of the Region's organizational structure for support services and should therefore pay particular attention to both the segregation and/or duplication in the delivery of corporate services and the consistency of regional structures and reporting relationships.

## Recommendations and Management Response

**22. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director conduct a review of the Region's organizational structure for the provision of corporate support services with a view to streamlining the Region's structure and delivery of support services.**

Currently there are a number of organizational reviews ongoing, both regionally and departmentally, pertaining to the provision of corporate support services. Regional Human Resources has undergone an organizational restructure and continues to streamline the support services provided. The learning and development organizational review within Prairie Region is approaching the final stage for implementation. The Corporate areas of Information Management Services across the Department are currently undergoing a



National review which will directly impact on the Organizational structures within the Regions. The Prairie Corporate Directors now meet regularly and are looking collectively at ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Regional Headquarters.

## **5.2 Options for an Improved Organizational Structure for Corporate Services**

In this section, we propose an organizational model for the Prairie Region to help with the above recommendation to conduct a review of the Region's organizational structure. When developing the proposed model we identified some preferred organizational design considerations:

- maintain, if not enhance, services;
- promote quality and integrity of service;
- able to address future demands on departmental systems;
- create a focal point for individual service;
- ensure consistency of information and processes;
- consider the extent to which corporate services should be available in regional offices;
- support is provided to the Senior Regional Director's planning, coordination, and liaison activities;
- ensure the options are workable/practical/business-like.

It is important to note that the model does not take into consideration the skill sets of individuals currently working in corporate support services and the implications of the proposed organizational model on classification levels.

We consulted with the Québec and Atlantic regional offices to assess their organizational structures for the provision of corporate support services. The Québec Region was chosen because, in the course of the CAC's review of administrative services, members of the Department of Justice's Business Management Board had indicated that the Montréal office should be examined as a possible model for the other regional offices since "they had taken steps to enhance the provisions of administrative services, and that client satisfaction had significantly increased." The Atlantic Region was selected because they provide a service in more than one province. In Québec, all corporate support services have been consolidated into one organizational unit reporting to the Regional Director. In the Atlantic Region, while several units are responsible for the provision of these services, they are now considering the possibility of consolidating them into one organizational unit.

### **5.2.1 Partially Decentralized Corporate Support Services**

This model is designed to facilitate regional planning, coordination and liaison capability at the regional level, and to provide some common support services in areas where specialization is required and where there could be efficiency gains. All other support services would be provided at the local level.

#### Description

1. The Senior Regional Director would have a corporate support unit, which would meet regional and corporate requirements including planning and coordination and would ensure consistency of approach throughout the Region. This unit would also be responsible for developing policies, systems, and procedures and undertake special projects (identified by senior management) on issues that have a regional impact. It would also provide some common services in specialized areas.
2. All other corporate support services would be provided at local offices.
3. Each local office would have an office manager that would be responsible for all corporate support services.

This model should have the following characteristics:

- a small group should be created that reports directly to the Senior Regional Director for corporate functions such as planning, coordination, liaison, development of policies, systems, procedures, and processes. This group would also provide functional direction to local offices and core services in specialized areas such as pay and benefits and classification;
- because all other corporate support services should be provided at the local offices, the Edmonton office should provide some of these services for the Calgary satellite office;
- at the local level, there should not be separate organizations providing corporate support services.

#### Pros

1. The Senior Regional Director is provided direct support to coordinate, liaise, and plan.
2. The functional framework for common services is provided at a regional (corporate) level.
3. Core services are provided at the local level.
4. Specialized services are provided in a more cost-effective manner.

5. Regional directors can concentrate more on law related activities.

### Cons

1. Consistency will be more difficult to attain.
2. There would be various levels of service/support throughout the Region.

### Recommendations and Management Response

**23. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director, in consultation with regional managers, adopt an organizational model that is based on partially decentralized management support services.**

Currently Regional Human Resources (HR) has implemented a structure that contains functional reporting relationships between the Winnipeg and Saskatoon Offices and Corporate HR. This has resulted in partially decentralized management support services for HR.

The Information Management Services Departmental Review will ultimately impact on the organizational models applied to the Regions. To that end, there is currently a direct reporting relationship between the Winnipeg and Saskatoon Offices and Corporate IMS. This remains centralized management support services for IMS.

Within the Finance and Administration Corporate area, a structure that contains functional reporting relationships between the Winnipeg and Saskatoon Offices and Corporate Finance and Administration has been established. This has resulted in partially decentralized management support services for Finance and Administration.

### **5.3 Appropriate Staffing Ratios**

This section of the report briefly describes different staffing ratios suggested by TBS or specialty organizations. Existing staffing ratios from the Prairie Region are compared to the suggested ratios.

The table below provides an overview of the distribution of FTEs by activity and by geographical location. It also provides the ratios for the same activities for the Department of

Justice and the benchmarks established by the TBS or by specialty (i.e. HR and libraries). In the preparation of Table 5 we used the report from the private consulting firm referenced earlier. Since the delineation between financial and administrative activities is not always clear (especially in local offices where incumbents may perform duties in both activities), and benchmarks do not exist for some administrative duties, we have included these duties into one grouping.

**Table 5: Staffing Ratios**

	DOJ	Edm.	Win.	Sask.	Calg.	Total Region
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>5240</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>558</b>
Finance and Administration		16	12	16	2	46
Employees/Finance Ratio		1:18	1:9	1:7	1:23	1:12
DOJ/Employee Ratio	1:32					
<i>TBS Shared Services Average<sup>15</sup></i>		<i>1:69</i>	<i>1:49</i>	<i>1:49</i>	<i>1:39</i>	<i>1:69</i>
Information Technology		4	3	2	1	10
Employees/IT Ratio		1:73	1:36	1:56	1:46	1:56
DOJ/Employee Ratio	1:30					
<i>TBS Shared Services Average</i>		<i>1:45</i>	<i>1:61</i>	<i>1:61</i>	<i>1:81</i>	<i>1:45</i>
Records Management		9	1	2	1	13
Employees/RM Ratio		1:32	1:108	1:57	1:46	1:43
Human Resources		21	2	2	0	25
Employee/HR Ratio		1:13	1:54	1:56	0	1:22
DOJ /Employee Ratio	1:30					
<i>TBS Shared Services Average (small)</i>			1:30	1:30		1:30
<i>TBS Shared Services Average (medium)</i>		<i>1:59</i>				<i>1:59</i>
Library		3	1	1	0	5
Employees/Library Ratio		1:52	1:64	1:54	0	1:54
DOJ/Employee Ratio	1:151					
<i>Government Libraries</i>		<i>1:147</i>	<i>1:147</i>	<i>1:147</i>	<i>1:147</i>	<i>1:147</i>
<i>Private and government law libraries (per lawyers)</i>		<i>1:40</i>	<i>1:40</i>	<i>1:40</i>	<i>1:40</i>	<i>1:40</i>
<b>Total</b>		<b>53</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Total employees/Corporate Services Ratio</b>		<b>1:5</b>	<b>1:6</b>	<b>1:5</b>	<b>1:12</b>	<b>1:6</b>

Note: The DOJ/Employee and the TBS Shared Services ratios were obtained from the CGI report. The CGI report did not identify or refer to ratios for Records Management staff. Therefore we cannot provide the DOJ/Employee ratio for Records Management or the TBS Shared Services average for Records Management.

With the exception of the library services and HR in Winnipeg and Saskatoon, at first glance, all the ratios for corporate support services in the Prairie Region are above average. However, the ratios recommended for regional offices do not take into account the partly decentralized structure of the Prairie Region, and the corporate role played by some of the employees in

<sup>15</sup> Medium agency—Edmonton office; small agencies—Winnipeg and Saskatoon; very small agencies—Calgary.

Edmonton. We have attempted briefly to include these factors into our following analyses of these ratios and recommendations for ratios appropriate for the Prairie Region.

### **5.3.1 Finance and Administration**

While the consulting firm used two benchmarks for their study of Prairie Region Finance and Administration staffing ratios, they recommend that the TBS Shared Services baseline be used for regional offices as it seems “more appropriate for the operational activities” performed by these offices. In our opinion this baseline does not take into consideration the corporate role played by some employees in Edmonton and the complexity of the budgeting system in the Department of Justice.

The complexity of the current organizational structures in the different offices and the lack of consistency in the Region’s roles and responsibilities do not allow us to recommend a ratio that could be adopted by the regional office. We believe a review of Finance and Administration activities is needed.

#### Recommendations and Management Response

**24. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director of the Prairie Region document and review how financial and administration activities are structured and performed before adopting a staffing ratio that is relevant to the Region’s needs.**

The Prairie Region structure is unique in Justice, and while numerous studies have tried to identify an appropriate financial and administrative structure for Regional Offices, to date nothing of value has been provided. The Prairie Region, in consultation with other Regions, and with HQ Corporate partners, is developing a Regional Corporate Structure that meets the needs of our employees and Management Team. We will then apportion funding as received to put this new structure in place.

### **5.3.2 Information Management Services**

While the consulting firm study included in its grouping of IT services such service activities as mail, registry, and records management, we are of the opinion that these activities/services should be excluded from IT staffing ratios.

For the Prairie Region, when each IT office is compared to the Department of Justice's IT ratio (1:30), TBS's Shared Services averages (1:45–1:81, depending on the size of the organization being supported), or the Gartner Group's (1:23), the Region's ratio is high. The Region's IT ratio does not factor in the corporate IT services provided by staff in Edmonton. Overall, the Region's ratio is equivalent to the Gartner Group ratio. Given that using technology improves productivity and the efficiency of employees, the Gartner Group benchmark should be used by the Prairie Region.

#### Recommendations and Management Response

**25. It is recommended that the Prairie Region use the Gartner Group benchmark when calculating the IT staffing ratio for the whole Region and that FTEs should be distributed according to the needs in each office.**

Underway. A review is in progress that will establish appropriate IM/IT staffing ratios.

#### **5.3.3 Library Services**

Two benchmarks were used by the consulting firm in its study: the National Core Library Statistics Program, Statistical Report 1996 (a report on private and government legal libraries) and the Canadian Association of Law Libraries (CALL) study (which reported on private law libraries). The consulting firm was unable to recommend a ratio since a good proportion of lawyers in departmental legal service units (located with client departments) receive library services from the client. Since the Prairie Region does not receive such services from client departments, and because of the nature of the work performed, the ratio should be closer to the ratio recommended by the report of the National Core Library Statistics Program (1:40), which is more relevant to the Region's mandate.

#### Recommendations and Management Response

**26. It is recommended that the Prairie Region adopt the ratio of National Core Library Statistics Program report.**

Underway. A review is in progress that will establish appropriate staffing ratios (including library).

### 5.3.4 Human Resources

The consulting firm study recommends that regional offices adopt the TBS Shared Services benchmark. While not going as far as recommending the ratio for small/very small agencies, the firm's comments suggest it would be more appropriate. They also indicate that more in-depth analysis of the activities performed is needed to identify any reliable basis for resources at the regional level. It is important to note that our figure for total staff in the Region (25) is higher than that used by the consulting firm (17) in their study for human resources activities because our figure is from a different year.

Given the current structure used by the Prairie Region for the provision of HR services, the lack of experience of recent recruits, and the absence of strategies and planning in this area, it might be more practical at this stage to use the benchmark for small agencies (1:30).

It is our view that the Region should conduct a HR needs assessment to determine the appropriate staffing ratios for each local office in the Region. Following the assessment action plans will have to be prepared to help move the staffing ratios toward the assessment findings.

#### Recommendations

**27. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director, Prairie Region, ensure that a HR needs assessment is conducted and that a follow-up action plan is developed to address the regional needs identified by the assessment.**

Recommendation implemented. A Prairie Region Human Resource Strategic Plan has been prepared which responds to this recommendation.





## **6. CONCLUSION**

The audit team found the staff and management of the Prairie Region to be extremely dedicated to their jobs and to serving their clients.

Except as noted in this report the audit found the Prairie Region effectively organized to deliver its services. Most linkages between local offices and linkages between the Region and NHQ were appropriate.

The audit found the management team structure to be effective for the region. However, the provision of corporate services to local offices could be improved as described in this report.



## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**

- 1. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director ensure that the Prairie Region enhances its planning activities both internally and with client departments by directing portfolios to meet with their clients on a regular basis and to formally prepare plans identifying expected caseloads and resource requirements. ....8**

The Region concurs that we must enhance our resource planning activities both internally and with client departments. As such, we are preparing an action plan that will ensure that the Region, in conjunction with the Portfolios, works closely with regional and national client department officials to identify expected caseload and resource requirements. It is anticipated that this action plan will be tabled at a Prairie Management Meeting during the winter of 2003/04 and that a pilot program will be operational before the end of the current fiscal period.

- 2. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director request that the Deputy Minister require that each NHQ portfolio allocate funding in a consistent manner to the Prairie Region budget.....12**
- 3. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director raise with the Deputy Minister ways of exploring how the Department can work with client departments to arrange the direct transfer of TBS-approved funds to the Department of Justice.**

(2 & 3) The Region concurs that the mechanisms for client funding through the portfolio system need improvement. However, this must be resolved and implemented on a departmental-wide basis. The Senior Regional Director agrees to work with her counterparts to improve the allocation and distribution of funds to regional offices on a departmental-wide basis.

- 4. It is recommended that the regional Director of HRS document the roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships of the HR staff throughout the Region and**

**ensure that HR roles and responsibilities are approved by the Senior Regional Director and distributed to all senior managers in the Region.....14**

The Region concurs with this recommendation. The regional Director of HRS has initiated a complete reorganization of HRS to meet the operational and strategic requirements of the Prairie Region and the Department. The SRD has approved the current and future HR organizational structures to enhance a pan-regional approach towards supporting the strategic goals and objectives of the Region.

**5. It is recommended that the regional Director, HRS, attend the meetings of the national HR Directors. ....14**

This recommendation is accepted. The Director, HRS has already met with the Directors of HR in NHQ to develop the rapport between NHQ and the Region. National teleconferences between the Directors of HR and NHQ have since been established on a monthly basis. Additionally, an annual conference for the Directors of HR has been planned that the Director will attend.

**6. It is recommended that the regional Director of HRS identify issues between the Region and NHQ and bring these issues to the attention of the Senior Regional Director and the Director General of HR in NHQ. ....14**

This recommendation is accepted and already implemented. The Director, Human Resources (HR) – Prairie Region met with the Senior Regional Director (SRD) – Prairie Region to identify and discuss issues between the Region and National Headquarters (NHQ). Subsequently, the Director, HR – Prairie Region met with the Director General of HR in NHQ to re-enforce the requirement for continual communication between the Regions and NHQ to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. This partnership ensures the alignment of Regional strategic goals and objectives to the strategic goals and objectives of the Department.

**7. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director, in conjunction with the Northern Region Senior Regional Director, assess the HR requirements for the Northern Region and ensure appropriate resources are allocated to the Prairie Region, without affecting Prairie Region services. ....15**

Regional HRS will continue to provide the existing HR management support services through the ongoing transition period. Once the appointments of both the Senior Regional Director and Human Resources Director have been made in the Northern Region, Senior Management will re-examine the ability to establish an independent Corporate infrastructure for the Office of the North.

**8. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director conduct a review of the support staff levels for the region. ....16**

This recommendation is accepted. The SRD will conduct a review to verify the current support staff levels across the Region and to compare those ratios to other regional offices.

**9. It is recommended that Senior Regional Director remind regional managers of the need to develop training plans for legal assistants to ensure they receive appropriate training to maintain and update their skills. ....17**

This recommendation is already implemented. Individualized learning plans exist across the Region for all employees, including legal assistants. Further, we are negotiating with NHQ for the delivery of specially designed courses for legal assistants, as well as developing our own courses to ensure useful and focused learning opportunities are available.

**10. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director request that HR at NHQ proceed with the review of paralegal positions as soon as possible. ....18**

The Prairie Management Team (PMT) initiated a Paralegal Study which is approaching its final phase. Model work descriptions have been developed to reflect the common activities of positions currently classified as Paralegals. These model work descriptions will be distributed to the Regional Directors, Legal Directors and managers for their review and comment to HR by end of calendar year. The model work descriptions will then be forwarded by Corporate Classification to the National Paralegal Committee (NPC) and the Union – Canadian Association of Professional Employees. The NPC will be coordinating the feedback from the Paralegal community through regional representatives.

An interdepartmental Classification Committee is scheduled to meet 12 January 2004 to classify the model work descriptions. Once the work descriptions have been classified, the implementation phase will begin.

- 11. It is recommended that Senior Regional Director ensure that reports dealing with issues of sensitive, high risk and/or high visibility are reviewed by the RCA prior to reports being approved by the Senior Regional Director. ....19**

This is already implemented. As part of its Regional Issues Management Process, the Regional Communications Director receives key regional briefing reports at the same time as or prior to their approval by or on behalf of the Senior Regional Director.

- 12. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director request that IMB at NHQ provide the Prairie Region RCA with direct access to relevant electronic directories of other Prairie Region offices. ....20**

The implementation of iCase will address this. In the interim, the Regional Issues Management Process now equips the Regional Communications Director with access to needed information.

- 13. It is recommended that the RCA and Senior Regional Director formally meet at least twice a month to discuss all items related to Communications. ....20**

This is done now. The Senior Regional Director and Regional Communications Director hold one-on-one meetings in person or by phone at least twice monthly.

- 14. It is recommended that the Regional Director of IMS notify regional staff that all Internet-related queries should be referred to the national Helpdesk. ....22**

Completed. All regional staff are now aware of the national Helpdesk.

- 15. It is recommended that the Alberta Regional Director document and distribute the role and responsibilities of the Edmonton law librarian. ....24**

Underway. The role and responsibilities of the Edmonton law librarian are under review. As part of this review, the librarian's regional responsibilities will be clarified.

- 16. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director request that PWGSC secure premises in Edmonton and all other locations that better accommodate the regional office's needs for staff, workspace, storage, interview rooms, and boardrooms. ....28**

Due to its exponential growth (over 300 new FTEs in 5 years with more planned) the Region has been working closely over the past five years with Regional Public Works staff and with those responsible for accommodations in Justice headquarters. Overall, these working relationships have been collegial and the results fruitful. Both Justice and PWGSC are aware that we must work within the guidelines that have been established for our offices, and we have sought to find the best possible solutions within that framework. In line with recommendations in the audit, we have invited the Director, Facilities Management to meet with our Prairie Management Team to discuss issues around accommodation in the Region. Finally, we note that there was incorrect information in the narrative regarding the Winnipeg Office.

**17. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director and the regional directors of Alberta, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg review the workload in all the offices to ensure there is a more reasonable distribution of cases per lawyer.....31**

The Region concurs that there is an ongoing need to ensure that workload is equitably distributed to all lawyers. While the audit refers to the “number of files per lawyer” as an indicator of workload, we feel that the analysis is much more complex; there are several factors that determine the amount of energy that is required to complete a file. The Caseview system currently collects information that permits managers to carry out a rigorous workload analysis and the Region is currently preparing an action plan that will ensure that all workload is regularly analysed. It is anticipated that this plan will be in place by the end of the current fiscal period.

**18. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director set a target date for completing the update of Caseview data. ....33**

Over the past year, the portfolios and the Legal Risk Management team in Headquarters have created standardized electronic audit reports. These reports have been designed to ensure that all mandatory data is included in the case management system and is monitored for accuracy. The audit reports have been delivered to the region and are now being regularly prepared by each office. Copies of the results are being supplied, not only to the regional offices, but also to the National Business Manager in Ottawa. The dual regional and national aspects of the audit ensure high levels of compliance. As a result of this new auditing procedure, the Region has completed updating the Caseview information.

**19. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director ensure that, once all the Caseview data has been updated, an analysis of the data is conducted to help in resource planning for the Region.....33**

The Region concurs that there is a strong corporate need to analyse Caseview data for resource allocation purposes. Accordingly, we are currently developing a business plan that will ensure this information will be reviewed regularly. At present, the reports necessary to effectively analyse workload have been created and are now available to regional managers. The four main reports are: Time billed to Client Departments, Time billed by Lawyer Classification, Open and Closed File Inventory Analysis, and Age of Inventory Analysis. It is anticipated that, by the end of the current fiscal period, a full analysis of this information will be regularly undertaken by managers at three levels: the operational unit; the Regional office; and the Region.

**20. It is recommended that the Regional Director of HRS allocate the responsibility for classification actions to more than two HR staff to provide a more equitable distribution of work.....34**

The Regional Human Resources Section has established the Classification Unit to manage the Classification and Organizational Design function within Prairie Region. This Unit is comprised of the Regional Manager - Classification, 1 full-time Classification Advisor, 1 half-time Classification Advisor, and 1 full-time Classification Assistant.

**21. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director of the Prairie Region develop service standards for the provision of corporate support services.....39**

Currently the Director, Human Resources, Prairie Region along with the HR Management Team are researching existing service standards for the provision of Corporate HR support services, both Departmentally and Inter-Departmentally. Concurrently, the Director of HR and the HR Management Team have restructured the HR Organization and are reviewing existing policies, practices and procedures in an effort to streamline HR service delivery. The review and analysis of this information will allow Regional HR Services to put systems and procedures in place that support the provision of a proactive and strategic HR service to a Region within a National framework.



- 22. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director conduct a review of the Region’s organizational structure for the provision of corporate support services with a view to streamlining the Region’s structure and delivery of support services.....40**

Currently there are a number of organizational reviews ongoing, both regionally and departmentally, pertaining to the provision of corporate support services. Regional Human Resources has undergone an organizational restructure and continues to streamline the support services provided. The learning and development organizational review within Prairie Region is approaching the final stage for implementation. The Corporate areas of Information Management Services across the Department are currently undergoing a National review which will directly impact on the Organizational structures within the Regions. The Prairie Corporate Directors now meet regularly and are looking collectively at ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Regional Headquarters.

- 23. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director, in consultation with regional managers, adopt an organizational model that is based on partially decentralized management support services.....43**

Currently Regional Human Resources (HR) has implemented a structure that contains functional reporting relationships between the Winnipeg and Saskatoon Offices and Corporate HR. This has resulted in partially decentralized management support services for HR.

The Information Management Services Departmental Review will ultimately impact on the organizational models applied to the Regions. To that end, there is currently a direct reporting relationship between the Winnipeg and Saskatoon Offices and Corporate IMS. This remains centralized management support services for IMS.

Within the Finance and Administration Corporate area, a structure that contains functional reporting relationships between the Winnipeg and Saskatoon Offices and Corporate Finance and Administration has been established. This has resulted in partially decentralized management support services for Finance and Administration.

- 24. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director of the Prairie Region document and review how financial and administration activities are structured and performed before adopting a staffing ratio that is relevant to the Region’s needs.....45**

The Prairie Region structure is unique in Justice, and while numerous studies have tried to identify an appropriate financial and administrative structure for Regional Offices, to date nothing of value has been provided. The Prairie Region, in consultation with other Regions, and with HQ Corporate partners, is developing a Regional Corporate Structure that meets the needs of our employees and Management Team. We will then apportion funding as received to put this new structure in place.

- 25. It is recommended that the Prairie Region use the Gartner Group benchmark when calculating the IT staffing ratio for the whole Region and that FTEs should be distributed according to the needs in each office.....46**

Underway. A review is in progress that will establish appropriate IM/IT staffing ratios.

- 26. It is recommended that the Prairie Region adopt the ratio of National Core Library Statistics Program report.....46**

Underway. A review is in progress that will establish appropriate staffing ratios (including library).

- 27. It is recommended that the Senior Regional Director, Prairie Region, ensure that a HR needs assessment is conducted and that a follow-up action plan is developed to address the regional needs identified by the assessment. ....47**

Recommendation implemented. A Prairie Region Human Resource Strategic Plan has been prepared which responds to this recommendation.