

Date: October 23, 2024

To: Representative Rick Hansen, Chair, Legislative Audit Commission  
Senator Mark Koran, Vice-Chair, Legislative Audit Commission

From: Judy Randall, Legislative Auditor 

Subject: External Communications Resources

On October 9, 2024, we met to discuss my annual performance review. At that meeting, you asked me to develop a proposal to hire an external communications specialist for the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA). This memo is in response to that request.

Over the past two weeks, I have had several discussions with OLA leadership regarding OLA's need for an external communications specialist. As you know, OLA leadership and managers must have excellent communication skills to be successful in their positions, including the ability to effectively explain complex concepts and skillfully field questions from reporters, elected officials, and the public.

While I am confident that OLA leadership and managers possess these skills, they have limited experience when it comes to talking with reporters. As a result, I believe that OLA leadership—including me—would benefit from training related to external communications, especially regarding interactions with the media. To that end, I have identified some training resources and have started the process of arranging training sessions for myself and certain other OLA staff.

As you know, OLA does not reach out to the media, does not conduct press conferences, and does not issue press releases. I estimate that OLA leadership and managers collectively spend less than 30 hours annually responding to media requests. My expectation is that the training I have identified will be sufficient to help OLA's existing staff effectively handle the office's external communications. As a result, I do not think it would be a prudent use of resources for OLA to hire an external communications specialist. If OLA determines that it needs additional support in this area, we would pursue hiring a consultant on an ad hoc, limited basis.

OLA's current budget is sufficient to cover both the cost of media training and a potential external relations consultant. As a result, I do not intend to include a request for an external communications specialist in the budget proposal I plan to present at next week's Legislative Audit Commission hearing.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further. Thank you for your continued support of OLA.