

VICTORIA

# Premier pledges reform for municipal audit office

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VICTORIA — Premier Christy Clark promised changes to plans for auditing local governments Wednesday, pledging reform of the troubled municipal auditor general's office and a new round of consultation to give the office more credibility with municipalities.

Clark specifically opened the door to exploring whether the auditor general for local government should be moved into the existing B.C. auditor general's office. That idea is supported by the Opposition NDP.

"All of the options are on the table for reform to make this work," Clark told reporters at the legislature. "We need to make it functional, because it's so important that local taxpayers get value for their money."

Clark's comments were the first since Monday when her government fired auditor general for local government Basia Ruta amid a dispute over why Ruta's office has been so unproductive and why she was trying to block a review of her performance.

Ruta pledged to take the government to court over her dismissal. She produced only three audits — out of a promised 18 — during two years in office with a \$5.2-million budget.

Clark, who promised to create the office in her 2011 Liberal leadership campaign, admitted the project "hasn't worked as successfully as we'd like."

The premier also promised a fresh round of consultations with local governments and the Union of B.C. Municipalities, who had complained their opinions were largely ignored by the province when the idea of the office was developed in 2011.

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