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HELPING PEOPLE AND CONTRIBUTING TO IMPROVED DELIVERY OF SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS OF ANNUAL REPORT

VICTORIA – Provincial Ombudsperson Kim Carter released her 2011/12 Annual Report today. In Carter's last report of her first six year term, she highlights the Office's work and jurisdiction over the largest number and widest array of authorities of any provincial ombudsperson in Canada. Over 8,000 inquiries and complaints were received and the most significant public authorities dealt with were the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, ICBC and the Workers' Compensation Board. Carter was reappointed for an unprecedented second term as ombudsperson by the Legislative Assembly on May 9, 2012.

"The work of this office helps improve our democratic system", says Carter. "It's a powerful combination when people come to us for assistance and we are able to offer an effective referral or a timely resolution which assists public agencies in improving the fairness of their processes and the effectiveness of their service delivery."

A number of complaints made by individuals resulted not only in resolution for them, but also improvements to program delivery including:

- ***Respecting the rights of youth in custody*** (Burnaby Youth Custody Services) Steps were taken to ensure all youth in custody have access to a private location (a soundproof booth) to make phone calls to privileged persons. A provincial policy was developed which sets out a youth's right to private communication with privileged persons. (pg 24)
- ***Eligibility requirements for an adopted child*** (Ministry of Health) Ministry revised practice of processing applications for adopted children. (pg 34)
- ***Policy change benefits others*** (Ministry of Justice) Changes were made to the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program policy and standard letters with respect to enforcement of child support for children over the age of 19. (pg 58)
- ***Sudden Stops*** (Translink) Several improvements were made to TransLink's sudden emergency braking claims processes. (pg 59)

Complaints resolved and included in the report include:

- ***Improving public input process*** (Cultus Lake Park Board) The investigation led to greater commitment to transparency and consultation and refunds of administration fees to affected individuals. (pg 48)
- ***Fees charged to involuntary residential care resident waived and reviewed*** (Vancouver Island Health Authority) The investigation resulted in fees not being charged to an involuntarily admitted patient and her transfer back to the same community where her husband lived. (pg 53)

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- **Knowing when it's best to stay put** (Community Living BC) The investigation into the procedure for planning and transitioning a youth to adult services resulted in CLBC agreeing to the youth remaining in the original community resource beyond the age of 19. CLBC also provided the funding. (pg 22)
- **Trail blazing** (Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure) A delay in reopening a public road access to a trail system resulted in the Office's involvement and the completion of work to the satisfaction of not only the complainants but the community as a whole. (pg 61)

In addition to individual inquiries and complaints, the Office of the Ombudsperson delivered three reports on seniors care in 2011/12. These were the *Best of Care: Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia (Part 2)*, *On Short Notice: An Investigation of Vancouver Island Health Authority's Process for Closing Cowichan Lodge* and *Honouring Commitments: An Investigation of Fraser Health Authority's Transfer of Seniors from Temporarily Funded Residential Care Beds*.

Updates on action by government in implementing recommendations on previous reports *Fit to Drink: Challenges in Providing Safe Drinking Water in British Columbia* and *Last Resort: Improving Fairness and Accountability in British Columbia's Income Assistance Program* are also included.

The annual report and all other special reports are available at www.bcombudsperson.ca. Hard copies are also available by contacting the Office at 1-800-567-3247 or at 250-387-5855.

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