

For Immediate Release

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Protecting Citizens and Promoting Government Transparency and Accountability

VICTORIA – Provincial Ombudsperson Kim Carter released her 2012/13 annual report today. Nearly 7,500 inquiries and complaints were responded to and 1,900 early resolutions or investigations were completed in 2012/13. The Ministry of Social Development; the Ministry of Children and Family Development; the Ministry of Justice; WorkSafeBC and ICBC were the five most significant provincial public authorities dealt with during the year. Also this year, the Ombudsperson delivered reports on *Open Meetings: Best Practices Guide for Local Governments* and *No Longer your Decision: British Columbia's Process for Appointing the Public Guardian and Trustee to Manage the Financial Affairs of Incapable Adults*.

“The work we did this year not only assisted people who came to us with problems but also the provincial authorities and public agencies we consulted with to find fair, reasonable and equitable resolutions”, says Carter. “Enhancing transparency and good governance at the local government level was also the subject of the office’s first ‘preventative ombudsmanship’ report.”

The annual report provides updates on action by government in implementing recommendations made in the following systemic reports:

- *The Best of Care, Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia*, parts 1 and 2
- *On Short Notice: An Investigation of Vancouver Island Health Authority's Process for Closing Cowichan Lodge*
- *Honouring Commitments: An Investigation of Fraser Health Authority's Transfer of Seniors from Temporarily Funded Residential Care Beds*
- *Last Resort: Improving Fairness and Accountability in BC's Income Assistance Program*
- *Fit to Drink: Challenges in Providing Safe Drinking Water in BC*

Some of the complaints resolved in 2012/13 and reported in the annual report include:

- **Getting medical coverage for father who moves back to BC** (Health Insurance BC) Vancouver Island/Sunshine Coast, pg 12
- **Amending escalating deductible policy so it does not apply to all vehicles** (Insurance Corporation of BC) The Lower Mainland, pg 22
- **StudentAid BC reconsiders its appeal decision and releases student loan so student is able to continue with education** (StudentAid BC, Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology), pg 25
- **Securing exceptional case coverage for a person requiring new drug** (PharmaCare, Ministry of Health) The Interior, pg 28
- **Speedy action keeps family in home** (Ministry of Social Development) The Lower Mainland, pg 36
- **Ensuring support for a college student** (Family Maintenance Enforcement Program, Ministry of Justice) The Lower Mainland, pg 38
- **Ministry agrees to pay utility bills** (Ministry of Social Development) The North, pg 40
- **Ensuring bylaws work** (City of Dawson Creek), pg 41
- **City refunds fine to resident** (City of Kelowna), pg 42
- **Dental coverage for a senior** (Pension Corporation) The Lower Mainland, pg 44
- **Grandparent gets help for providing care** (Ministry of Children and Family Development) The Interior, pg 44
- **Emergency costs covered after all** (Ministry of Environment) The Interior, pg 46

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- **A renegotiated payment plan unfreezes bank account** (Ministry of Justice) Vancouver Island/Sunshine Coast, pg 48
- **Reconsideration by the Law Society** (The Law Society of British Columbia) The Lower Mainland, pg 50

A number of complaints made by individuals to the office in 2012/13 resulted not only in resolutions for individuals, but also improvements to program delivery including:

- **Ministry refunds fee to 1,302 non practicing teachers following one complaint to our office** (Ministry of Education), pg 46
- **Ensuring there's post-adoption support after divorce** (Ministry of Children and Family Development) Vancouver Island/Sunshine Coast, pg 19
- **Improvements to information flow benefits all parties** (Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations) The Lower Mainland, pg 33
- **Amending policy that seizes personal funds** (Burnaby Youth Custody Services, Ministry of Children and Family Development) The Lower Mainland, pg 17
- **Taking steps to clarify parental role** (Ministry of Children and Family Development) The Interior, pg 18
- **More accessible, thorough information made available** (Vital Statistics Agency) Vancouver Island/Sunshine Coast, pg 20
- **Enforcement officers take action on safety violation concerns and incorporate into campaign** (Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement Branch) Vancouver Island/ Sunshine Coast, pg 22
- **New procedure implemented** (Motor Vehicle Sales Authority of BC) the Interior, pg 23
- **Ensuring protocols are known and followed by all affected agencies** (Medical Services Plan) Vancouver Island/Sunshine Coast, pg 29
- **Reviewing procedures and recording the correct information** (BC Assessment) The Interior, pg 32
- **Improving the information flow** (North Cedar Improvement District), pg 41

The Ombudsperson's annual report is available at www.bcombudsperson.ca.

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