

For Immediate Release

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OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT EXPLAINS WORK, SHOWS GROWTH

VICTORIA - Ombudsman Kim Carter released her 2007/08 annual report today. It documents that more people are contacting her office for help, and includes 50 examples of complaints that her office investigated.

In 2007/08, the total number of people who contacted the Office of the Ombudsman was 6,699, compared to 6,438 in 2006, which is the first increase in intakes since 2001. Spreading awareness of her office and its role has been a priority for Ms. Carter since her appointment in May 2006.

"I believe the larger number of people contacting us shows that we are making progress in our efforts to let people know that we are here, and that they can come to us if they feel a provincial public agency has treated them unfairly," Ms. Carter said.

As part of her efforts to connect with all parts of the province, the Ombudsman's 2007/08 annual report includes some new features:

- statistics showing the number of files the office opened, by electoral district (see page 59)
- identification of the broad regional origin of selected case summaries (see the attached Case Summary Highlights)

"I've visited numerous B.C. communities since becoming Ombudsman, and people have often asked me for examples of complaints from their area. This report will help demonstrate that we are an independent voice for fairness in all parts of the province."

Ms. Carter said the case summaries included in her annual report are meant to show not only the diversity of her office's work, but the importance of having an impartial agency to which people can bring their unresolved complaints about public authorities.

"In many cases, the people who complained to us about treatment they believed to be unfair improved things not only for themselves, but for others who came after them," Ms. Carter said.

The Ombudsman's office released two special reports in 2007/08: *Victims of Crime; Victims of Change: Transition and Discretion in Crime Victim Assistance Legislation in British Columbia* and *Winning Fair and Square: A Report on the British Columbia Lottery Corporation's Prize Payout Process*. All recommendations in these reports were accepted, and either have been, or are being, implemented. Ms. Carter said she will continue to emphasize the systemic aspect of her office's work in 2008/09.

The Ombudsman's mandate is to ensure that public administration in B.C. is fair, transparent and accountable. The public bodies over which the Ombudsman has jurisdiction include: provincial ministries, health authorities, Crown corporations, colleges and universities, school districts, self-regulating professions and local governments.



News Release

www.ombudsman.bc.ca

The Ombudsman's annual report is available at www.ombudsman.bc.ca. Anyone who wishes to complain to the Ombudsman's office can do so by letter, fax, online complaint form, or by calling 1-800-567-3247 (toll free).

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