

For Immediate Release

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OMBUDSPERSON AND STAFF TO VISIT EAST KOOTENAY AREA

VICTORIA – British Columbia Ombudsperson Kim Carter will tour the East Kootenay area this February with her staff, spreading the word about her office’s role in ensuring that provincial public agencies treat people fairly.

The East Kootenay tour is part of the Ombudsperson’s ongoing efforts to improve understanding of the services provided by her office, which are free and confidential. The outreach tour allows the Ombudsperson to meet with various community groups and some of the public agencies that fall under her jurisdiction. These agencies include provincial ministries, Crown corporations, colleges and universities, boards of education, health authorities and local governments.

The tour also provides a chance for members of the public to make a complaint in person, as Ombudsperson staff set up temporary offices in each community visited. Due to demand, appointments must be booked ahead of time by calling 1-800-567-3247.

Ms. Carter noted that while her office receives the bulk of complaints by telephone, mail or online, some people are more comfortable meeting face-to-face when raising their concerns. She said it’s important to her that this opportunity is available to people throughout the province.

“We’re here to serve the entire province, and I want people to know they can come to us if they believe a public agency has not dealt with them fairly.”

The Ombudsperson’s office investigates complaints impartially and confidentially. While striving to settle complaints through consultation, the Ombudsperson, as an independent officer of the legislature, can also choose to make recommendations and issue public reports. The office responded to approximately 8,000 complaints and enquiries in the 2008/09 fiscal year.

The schedule for the tour is below:

Cranbrook	February 2
Fernie	February 3
Kimberley	February 4

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To schedule a media interview with the Ombudsperson or for more information, please contact:

Karen Sawatzky: (250) 356-7740 (direct) or 1-800-567-3247 (toll-free)