

For Immediate Release

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**IMPROVING THE CARE OF SENIORS:
OMBUDSPERSON RELEASES REPORT WITH 176 RECOMMENDATIONS**

VICTORIA – Today Ombudsperson Kim Carter released a 400 plus page report on her office's three year investigation into the care of seniors in British Columbia. *The Best of Care: Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia (Part 2)* is a comprehensive and in depth investigation that makes 143 findings and 176 recommendations. The recommendations are designed to improve home and community care, home support, assisted living and residential care services for seniors.

“Our report focuses on key areas where significant changes should be made with many recommendations that can be implemented quickly,” says Carter. “We need to provide a renewed commitment to some of the most deserving and vulnerable members of our communities; a commitment that focuses on their needs, listens to their concerns and respects their choices.”

The report makes specific recommendations to the Ministry of Health and the five regional health authorities. These recommendations include:

- Providing clear information to seniors and their families; tracking key home and community care data and reporting it publicly in an annual home and community care report
- Supporting seniors and families in navigating the home and community care system
- Protecting seniors through consistent reporting and tracking of abuse and neglect
- Protecting those who complain in good faith about home and community care services from any adverse consequences for doing so
- Assisting seniors to continue to live at home by assessing the adequacy of current home support programs and analysing the benefits and costs of expansion
- Ensuring objective and enforceable standards of care for home support services
- Ensuring fair and equal treatment by immediately making certain that no seniors in assisted living are charged for services and benefits that are included in the assessed client rate
- Establishing an active inspection, monitoring and enforcement program in assisted living residences
- Ensuring equal treatment, benefits and protection of seniors in residential care by establishing one legislative framework that applies to all residential care facilities
- Ensuring fair treatment by not charging fees to seniors involuntarily detained in residential care under the *Mental Health Act*
- Ensuring objective and enforceable standards of care for seniors in residential care
- Enhancing dementia and end-of-life care services in residential care

During the investigation, the Ombudsperson found that the Ministry of Health has not made sure that seniors and their families have access to adequate assistance and support to navigate the complex home and community care system; has not analyzed whether the home support program is meeting its goal of assisting seniors to live in their own homes as long as it is practical; and that it is ineffective and inadequate for the Ministry of Health to rely on responding to complaints and serious incident reports as its main form of oversight for assisted living. The Ombudsperson also found that the Ministry of Health's decision to maintain two separate legislative frameworks for residential care has resulted in unfair differences in the care and services seniors receive and the fees they pay.

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“Our goal is for there to be consistent, province-wide standards and processes that treat seniors across B.C. in a fair and equitable manner,” adds Carter.

While the health authorities have responded to some of the recommendations in the report, the majority of the Ombudsperson’s recommendations are currently being considered by the Ministry of Health. The Ombudsperson will monitor progress that is made on the recommendations and report the results through the office’s website.

The Ombudsperson launched her systemic investigation into seniors’ care issues in 2008. Part 1 of the Ombudsperson’s report, *The Best of Care: Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia (Part 1)* was released in December, 2009. It contained 10 recommendations that focused exclusively on issues affecting seniors in residential care.

The Best of Care: Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia (Part 2) is available at www.bcombudsperson.ca.

Also released today are two additional investigation reports related to seniors’ care issues. Both reports and news releases can be found at www.bcombudsperson.ca. They are:

- [*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*](#)
- [Read the Seniors’ Report \(Part2\)](#)
- [FACT Sheet](#)

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