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OMBUDSMAN LAUNCHES SYSTEMIC INVESTIGATION INTO SENIORS' CARE

VICTORIA – B.C. Ombudsman Kim Carter announced today that she has launched a systemic investigation into problems with seniors' care, including residential and assisted living facilities and home support services.

The Ombudsman's office is already responding to more than 50 individual complaints about seniors' care that it's received since late June, when the Ombudsman issued a news release about her office's role in the investigation of these types of complaints. For example, the office has received complaints about neglect in care facilities, accessibility of services, placement decisions, separation from spouses and the closure of facilities. Ms. Carter said she decided to launch the systemic investigation in response to these complaints, and after meeting with a number of seniors groups about their concerns.

"Seniors are part of a generation that had to do without and overcome adversity, so they may be less inclined to complain," Ms. Carter said. "Some seniors may be unable to complain effectively because of their physical or mental challenges, or may be reluctant to do so because they feel vulnerable."

The systemic investigation will examine various aspects of seniors' care, including access to services, standards of care in facilities, and monitoring and enforcement of those standards. It will also look at how information about seniors' care services is provided to the public and to those affected by decisions.

The Ombudsman's mandate is to ensure that public administration in B.C. is fair, transparent and accountable. In addition to investigating individual complaints, the Ombudsman also conducts systemic investigations into complex issues and makes recommendations for improvement. The public bodies over which the Ombudsman has jurisdiction include: provincial ministries, health authorities, Crown corporations, colleges and universities, school districts and municipalities.

As part of the investigative process, the Ombudsman has posted a questionnaire about seniors' care at www.ombudsman.bc.ca, to which the public is invited to respond in confidence. People who have a specific complaint about seniors' care services may submit a complaint online or by calling 1-800-567-3247.