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OMBUDSMAN TO INVESTIGATE DRINKING WATER SAFETY

VICTORIA – B.C. Ombudsman Kim Carter announced today that she has initiated an Ombudsman investigation into the fairness and adequacy of the public advisory and complaints processes regarding drinking water safety.

The Ombudsman's office is British Columbia's independent voice for fairness. It investigates complaints about public authorities, including provincial corporations, boards and commissions, and looks into their administrative actions and processes to ensure transparency and accountability.

“Recent complaints to my office have raised questions about the drinking water advisory and complaints processes in British Columbia,” said Carter. “Safe drinking water is an extremely important part of the lives and health of all British Columbians. It is important that we have well established, timely, and effective processes for notifying the public about problems and for investigating and responding to concerns and complaints from members of the public. Both of these procedures are integral to the monitoring and enforcement of water safety standards.”

The investigation will include a particular focus on small water systems having fewer monitoring requirements than larger systems. Specific areas to be addressed in the investigation include:

- The fairness and adequacy of the drinking water complaints process;
- Public notification methods when drinking water safety issues arise; and
- Data collection systems for tracking notifications and complaints.

In conducting the investigation, the Ombudsman will be in contact with many authorities who are part of the water safety system including the Ministry of Health, health authorities, and water suppliers. In addition a questionnaire is available on the Ombudsman website at www.ombudsman.bc.ca for individuals who wish to provide their input into this investigation.

People who have concerns or complaints about administrative fairness can write to the Ombudsman's office, complete an online complaint form at www.ombudsman.bc.ca, or telephone 1-800-567-3247.

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