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OMBUDSMAN AND STAFF TO VISIT ISLAND COMMUNITIES

VICTORIA – British Columbia Ombudsman Kim Carter is going on the road this month, spreading the word about the Ombudsman office’s role in ensuring that provincial public agencies treat people fairly.

The Vancouver Island outreach tour is part of the Ombudsman’s ongoing efforts to improve understanding of the services provided by her office, which are free and confidential. The tour allows the Ombudsman 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, school boards, health authorities and local governments.

The tour also provides a chance for members of the public to make a complaint in person, as Ombudsman 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 Ombudsman’s office investigates complaints impartially and confidentially. While striving to settle complaints through consultation, the Ombudsman, as independent officer of the legislature, can also choose to make recommendations and issue public reports. The office responded to 6,699 complaints and enquiries in the 2007/08 fiscal year.

The schedule for the Ombudsman’s tour of Vancouver Island is below:

Nanaimo	February 23
Parksville	February 24
Port Alberni	February 25
Tofino	February 26
Ucluelet	February 27

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

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