



News Release

January 19, 2010

Review Finds Child-Friendly Complaint Process Needed for Children and Youth in Care

VICTORIA -- Children and youth have a right to make a complaint about government services they receive, and the complaint process should be easy with quick resolution, British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth and B.C.'s Ombudsperson say in a joint report released today.

In *Hearing the Voices of Children and Youth*, Representative Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond and Ombudsperson Kim Carter point out ways in which the Ministry of Children and Family Development can make its complaint process more accessible and responsive to the vulnerable young people it serves. They identify seven opportunities for the government to improve the process.

"Vulnerable young people have a right to have their voices heard and their views considered in decisions that affect them," said Turpel-Lafond. "If they disagree with or fail to understand why they are being treated in a certain way, they need to know they have a right to complain and that their concerns will be heard."

"One of the things we learned in this review was that children in care may not know how to raise concerns if they feel the Ministry of Children and Family Development is not addressing their needs or treating them fairly," said Carter. "If we truly want to protect children and youth, it's vital that the complaint process is well-known, readily accessible and provides timely responses."

In a video posted on the web, a former youth in care, the Representative and the Ombudsperson discuss the complaint process, the roles of their offices and how a young person can make a complaint.

The report and the video can be viewed at www.rcybc.ca and www.ombudsman.bc.ca.

The Representative and the Ombudsperson are available today to speak to media.

-30-

Media Contact:

Marg LeGuilloux
Communications Director
Representative for Children and Youth
O) 250.356.0835
C) 250.893.8244

Karen Sawatzky
Outreach, Information & Education Officer
Office of the Ombudsperson,
O) 250.356.7740 or 1.800.567.3247