

**For Immediate Release  
Office of the Ombudsman  
PR05-005**

November 29, 2005

## **OMBUDSMAN SUSPENDS INVESTIGATION INTO CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICES**

**VICTORIA** – Acting Provincial Ombudsman Howard Kushner today announced that he is suspending his investigation into the child protection practices of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. “The concerns that prompted me to initiate an investigation appear to be included in the reviews that were subsequently announced by the Child and Youth Officer and the Coroners Service,” stated Kushner. “When I notified the ministry of my investigation last August, there were no other reviews or investigations underway. There are now several reviews planned or in progress, and I believe those reviews have become broad enough in scope to include the matters that were under investigation by my office.”

Kushner said that as an office of last resort, it is generally not the practice of the Ombudsman’s Office to investigate matters while they are under review by a public agency or tribunal. “However, once a review is completed, our office may investigate matters not addressed, or not fully covered, by the review, and we can decide to investigate the adequacy of the review process itself,” notes Kushner.

“I still have a strong interest in the matters under review; however, I am also mindful of legitimate concerns about duplication and overlap by the offices investigating related issues,” said Kushner. “Recent cases have drawn attention to the challenges faced by child protection workers as well as the value and importance of their work. Those same cases have also raised questions regarding the adequacy of resources, the role of the ministry in monitoring and supporting delegated agencies, the extent to which child protection practice standards are met and the measures taken by the ministry to ensure compliance with those practice standards. The information I have collected to date in the course of our investigation will help me to decide whether those questions have been answered fully once the existing reviews are completed.”

Kushner stated that his investigation was initiated on August 12, 2005; however, he decided to announce his intentions publicly on September 22, 2005, in response to questions in the media regarding the lack of independent oversight of public programs for children and youth. “It was suggested that cuts to my budget and the closure of the Children’s Commission and the Office of the Child, Youth and Family Advocate left a gap with respect to independent oversight. It was important for me to inform the public, at that time that despite cuts to my budget, the Office of the Ombudsman is committed to investigating concerns related to children and youth and that our office was in fact already investigating the child protection practices of the ministry.”

The Office of the Ombudsman is an independent office reporting to the Legislative Assembly. The office has authority to investigate complaints about provincial and civic public services. The BC Coroner’s Services and the Child and Youth Office are included in the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction.

-30-

**Contact:**  
**Bruce Ronayne, Director of Investigations**  
**(250) 387-0196 (direct) or toll free at 1-800-567-3247**