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September 5, 2006

Information and Privacy Commissioner
1675 Douglas Street, 4th Floor
PO Box 9038 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9A4

by fax only to (250) 387-1696

Dear Commissioner:

Re: Application of Act as it Applies to the Internet

Accompanying this letter is a statement from the Minister of Children and Family Development that one gets when clicking on "read more" under a September 1st latest news story on the Ministry's website. Before the read more item, the website says: "The Ministry of Children and Family Development is taking immediate steps to address issues that were identified in a Special Case Review, recently completed by the ministry." The Minister's statement concludes with a note that advises that: "The Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act limits the Ministry's ability to post the Special Case Review on this site. However, copies of the report are available by contacting PAB Communications at (250) 356-0233.

I am surprised that the Act would have different application if a government document is made available on a website as opposed to mailing a copy to anyone who makes a request by telephone. I don't know whether the Ministry is relying on having misnamed the Act when it should have referred to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or whether there is a basis in an interpretation of the Act that has been made by your office.

Do you agree with the note regarding the application of the Act to disseminating certain types of documents by means of a government website? Please refer me to any rulings you have made which elaborate on any interpretation of the Act that allows distribution of documents by Canada Post but not by a website.

Sincerely,

David D. Schreck

cc: Kelly Gleeson, Communications Director, fax 250 356-3007

Minister's Statement: Special Case Review
September 1, 2006

The Ministry of Children and Family Development is taking immediate steps to address issues that were identified in a Special Case Review, recently completed by the ministry. The review underlined that the ministry is prepared to ask the tough questions and, just as importantly, take steps to improve the foster care system.

Over the past two years, ministry staff has been developing new caregiver support service standards and these will be introduced in the next few months. The new standards will clarify the expectation and role of resource social workers who work with foster children, and will require meetings every 90 days in the foster home, with the foster parents.

A new audit tool also is being developed to ensure compliance of the new standards and to better measure and improve practices and training for resource social workers.

The Special Case Review highlighted that foster parents have a very challenging job and more must be done to build capacity in the foster care system. A Provincial Recruitment Advisory Committee is working to develop strategies and initiatives to help address the issue of retention and recruitment of foster parents.

The February 2006 budget added resources that will allow the ministry to hire four hundred front-line workers over the next three years – one hundred of which are being filled this fall. We will continue to work to ensure the system has the resources needed to provide more flexibility.

It is important to recognize that 3,000 foster parents provide care across the province and the overwhelming majority of them provide excellent support under very demanding circumstances. I believe the best way of recognizing this work is by moving forward with improvements and enhancements to the system that increase support to foster parents and improve care to children in foster homes.

Tom Christensen
Minister, Children and Family Development

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