

## Implementation of Recommendations Update:

### Public Report No. 45, Last Resort: Improving Fairness and Accountability in British Columbia's Income Assistance Program

In March 2009, the Ombudsman issued Public Report No. 45, *Last Resort: Improving Fairness and Accountability in British Columbia's Income Assistance Program*. The investigation focused on the following:

- issues relating to income assistance applications including the application process, the three-week work search requirement, the immediate needs assessment, the two-year financial independence requirement, and changes in the income assistance case-load
- the eligibility criteria and assessment process for Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB), as well as the number of PPMB clients
- the requirements to submit and resubmit medical and other documentation
- the implementation of previous commitments which included commitments to implement the decisions of appeal boards, monitor program effectiveness and staff compliance with policy, and provide reasons for ministry decisions

The Ombudsman issued 25 recommendations to the Ministry of Housing and Social Development with various timelines for implementation. The Ministry of Housing and Social Development accepted and committed to implementing all of the recommendations, with the exception of one. Recommendation 23, which dealt with compensation to individuals adversely affected by the ministry's delay in initiating a regulatory amendment, was not accepted.

By August 1, 2009 the following recommendations were implemented:

#### **Recommendation 4**

*The ministry take the necessary steps to include an exemption from the three-week work search requirement in the Employment and Assistance Regulation for applicants who demonstrate that a work search to the ministry's standards was conducted in the three weeks immediately prior to their application.*

The Ministry of Housing and Social Development completed this recommendation through the creation of BC Reg. 98/2009 (effective April 28, 2009). This Order in Council amended the *Employment and Assistance Regulation* and the *Employment Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Regulation* allowing applicants for assistance to search for employment either three weeks following the date of application or to be able to demonstrate that a search for employment was completed prior to the date of the application.

#### **Recommendation 5**

*The ministry take the necessary steps to include an exemption from the three-week work search requirement in the Employment and Assistance Regulation for single parents with children under the age of three.*

The Ministry of Housing and Social Development completed this recommendation through the creation of BC Reg. 99/2009 (effective April 28, 2009). This Order in Council amended the *Employment and Assistance Regulation* and the *Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Regulation* to exempt sole applicants with a child under age three from the three-week work search requirement.

### **Additional Recommendations**

The Office of the Ombudsman will continue to report on the implementation of the remaining recommendations made in this report.