



BY FAX

September 27, 2006

Hon. Olga Ilich
Minister of Labour and Citizens' Services
Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC V8W 4X4

Dear Minister:

OIPC Budget—OIPC File No. F06-29809

I write in light of your letter published today in *The Daily Courier* (Kelowna), in which you said the budget for this Office has “overall, increased 6.8 percent since 2001/02.”

Your letter responded to a report published yesterday that touches on the funding for this Office. That report observes that there were significant cuts in the funding for this Office's enforcement of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, while the statement in your letter refers to the “overall” funding for this Office.

It is important to underscore that this Office's funding for enforcement of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* was in fact significantly affected by budget cuts beginning in 2002-2003.

Our operating budget for the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* was cut by 10% in 2002-2003 and another 10% in 2003-2004, with a further cut of 15% for our *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* activities proposed for 2004-2005. Our overall budget was increased in 2004-2005 solely because of the significant new responsibilities this Office was given in enforcing the *Personal Information Protection Act*, which came into force on January 1, 2004. That law covers the entire provincially-regulated private sector in British Columbia. This Office's duties under the *Personal Information Protection Act* represent a substantial expansion of our responsibilities beyond those under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. To be clear, the budget increase in 2004-2005 related solely to our new *Personal Information Protection Act* role and in no way related to the existing *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* functions.

It should also be noted that this Office's budget now includes \$97,000 a year to fund its activities under the *Lobbyists Registration Act*, which designates me as Registrar of Lobbyists. These duties are in addition to those under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. This funding was not reflected in our 2001-2002 budget, which related solely to our *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* activities.

As a direct result of the cuts to our budget, I had to terminate the employment of a number of individuals and otherwise reduce the Office's staffing complement. In 2001-2002, this Office

had 23 staff, including me, for its activities, which related solely to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. In 2002-2003, the cuts reduced us to 15 staff, including me. In the current fiscal year, we have funding for 20 staff, including me, despite our considerable new responsibilities under the *Personal Information Protection Act* and the *Lobbyists Registration Act*.

This Office's budget was increased for the current fiscal year to meet increased salary costs, to meet higher operating costs and to hire staff to deal with materially increased workloads under three laws, not one—the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the *Personal Information Protection Act* and the *Lobbyists Registration Act*. This welcome development has been the only sign of meaningful change in our budget situation for several years as it relates to our *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* oversight responsibilities.

A copy of this letter will be posted on our website today.

Yours sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

David Loukidelis
Information and Privacy Commissioner
for British Columbia

cc: Blair Lekstrom MLA
Chair, Select Standing Committee on Finance & Government Services

Lori Wanamaker
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Labour & Citizens' Services

Dave Nikolejsin
Chief Information Officer
Ministry of Labour & Citizens' Services

Sharon Plater
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