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**For Immediate Release**  
Sept. 22, 2011

**Government responding faster to access to information requests — Commissioner focus to shift to quality of responses**

**VICTORIA** — The B.C. government is responding faster to access to information requests. In the past year, 93 per cent of the requests were responded to on time, up from 90 per cent a year ago. This data is contained in the Information and Privacy Commissioner's third *Report Card* issued today.

The B.C. *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* ("FIPPA") requires public bodies to respond to access to information requests within 30 business days. Due to significant and widespread non-compliance with this requirement detected two years ago, the commissioner began auditing and publicly reporting on government response times.

In addition to increasing the number of requests responded to on time, for overdue requests, the government reduced the average number of days a response was late from 25 days to 17.

"While government has improved its response times, it will take a sustained and determined effort to maintain and improve response timeliness in years to come," Information and Privacy Commissioner Elizabeth Denham said. "One way this can happen is by proactively publishing records online, particularly those that are of interest to the public."

This year, the commissioner again expressed concerns that responses to requests made by the media and political parties took much longer than the law permitted.

In addition to pushing for proactive disclosure, the commissioner recommended that all the data supplied by the government in the course of the timeliness audit be publicly and regularly disclosed "so that the citizens of B.C. can track for themselves government's progress in responding to access requests."

The commissioner also recommended that the government employ uniform practices with respect to verifying the identity of individuals requesting their own information, to reduce unnecessary and unauthorized delays in the processing of personal requests.

Due to the improvements in timeliness, the commissioner indicated that, "Next year, I will shift my focus to assess the quality of the information released by government, including the data released through proactive disclosure."

The full text of the report can be found at: [www.oipc.bc.ca](http://www.oipc.bc.ca)

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