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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **OPEN INFORMATION AND OPEN DATA POLICY A PROMISING MILESTONE**

**VICTORIA** — Information and Privacy Commissioner Elizabeth Denham commends government for its new “Open Information and Open Data” initiative that was launched today.

“This is a very important step forward in terms of meeting the public’s expectations for transparency in government. I know British Columbians will benefit from having easier and more timely access to government information,” said Commissioner Denham. Datasets will be made available on government websites so that citizens can use them for research or other purposes. There will also be proactive disclosure of information which will enable citizens to increase their knowledge about government decision-making processes and participate in them.

Last July in her report, *It’s About Time—Report Card on Timeliness of Government Access to Information Responses*, Denham publicly recommended the government commit to a robust proactive disclosure strategy where information is routinely disclosed to the public on a regular basis without the need for access to information requests.

In a subsequent report released last month, *Investigation into the Simultaneous Disclosure Practices of BC Ferries*, Denham issued best practices for proactive disclosure of government information. She is pleased to see that the government’s new policy includes many of the report’s recommendations, including implementing a delay between releasing or disclosure and posting results of access to information requests.

Under the new policy, ministries are expected to routinely post responses to general FOI requests, designate categories of information for routine release and to do so free of charge. Deputy ministers are expected to promote the objectives of the policy and ensure that information is routinely reviewed for suitability for public release. “This policy demonstrates intent by government to adopt a presumption favouring disclosure,” she said.

Denham stated she would closely monitor implementation of the policy to ensure it meets the proactive disclosure best practices. “There is always a fear that a new initiative like this will lose momentum and focus following the initial launch,” she said. The Commissioner was encouraged that the policy is supported by a directive from Premier Christy Clark.

The Commissioner will develop criteria by which her office will assess the results of this proactive disclosure program and will report on the government’s progress in 2012.

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