



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Public Guardian and Trustee
of British Columbia

WOODLANDS CLASS ACTION DEADLINE FAST APPROACHING

PGT wants to ensure potential class members are aware of the action

VANCOUVER – The Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia (PGT) is urgently seeking to contact people who were resident at Woodlands School in New Westminster, BC on or after August 1, 1974 and who may not be aware of an upcoming class action deadline that affects them said Catherine Romanko, Deputy Public Guardian and Trustee.

“The point in contacting these former residents of Woodlands is to ensure that they are aware of the settlement of a class action law suit and that they may be eligible to file a claim for compensation,” said Romanko. “The PGT has been unable to locate many former residents to inform them of the process.”

The deadline to file a claim is September 19, 2011 and many eligible former Woodlands residents may not be aware of this important date.

“This is about the rights and interests of the former residents,” said Romanko. “They should be able to share in the settlement, but the first step is to be sure that eligible former residents are aware that the action has settled and the deadline to file a claim is very close.”

A private law firm—Klein Lyons—is acting for former residents to advance individual claims for compensation and they can be contacted directly at 604.874.7171 or through their website at: www.kleinlyons.com. The PGT is assisting in locating potential class members and will help former residents if they wish or if they require help bringing a claim for compensation.

It is estimated there are approximately 1,000 former residents of Woodlands who attended the school after August 1, 1974 and may be eligible to make a claim.

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[BACKGROUNDER](#) on Woodlands Class Action is attached
[BACKGROUNDER](#) on the PGT is attached

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BACKGROUND: WOODLANDS CLASS ACTION

- In 1950, BC Provincial Mental Health Services were amalgamated and New Westminster's Provincial Hospital for the Insane was renamed as Woodlands School, repurposed as a residential facility for the developmentally disabled.
- In 2002, BC Ombudsman Dulcie McCallum released a report after investigating resident complaints which highlighted evidence of systemic abuses at Woodlands.
- A class action was first certified by the Supreme Court of British Columbia in March of 2005.
- In 2008, the class became restricted only to people who were resident at Woodlands School in New Westminster, BC on or after August 1, 1974. This is the date that the *Crown Proceedings Act* came into effect; the British Columbia Court of Appeal held in a recent decision that government cannot be sued for liability relating to events that occurred prior to that date.
- The Supreme Court defined the class as follows:

"The class action is open to all persons resident in British Columbia, who were confined to the provincial institution more recently known as Woodlands School on or after August 1, 1974 and who, while so confined, suffered physical, sexual, emotional and/or psychological abuse and have suffered injury, loss or damage as a result thereof."

- The PGT is proceeding with advancing claims on behalf of each of its clients who is a potential class member, in accordance with the process established under the Supreme Court approved settlement of July 7, 2010.
- Notices advising of the settlement appeared in newspapers throughout British Columbia and letters were also sent to identified class members.
- Potential claimants can contact the PGT at 604.660.5458 for further assistance.
- Please visit <http://www.trustee.bc.ca/services/adult/woodlands.htm> for further information about the history of the class action.
- Please contact class counsel via their website: www.kleinlyons.com, or telephone them at 604.874.7171 for further information on how to pursue a claim.

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Backgrounder continued

About The Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia

The Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia (PGT) is a corporation sole established under the Public Guardian and Trustee Act and providing services under numerous statutes.

Its mandate is to serve:

- *Children and youth under the age of 19 by protecting their legal and financial interests;*
- *Adults who require assistance in decision making through protection of their legal rights, financial interests, personal and health care interests; and*
- *Deceased persons where there is no one willing or able to administer their estates, the estates of missing persons and the beneficiaries of personal trusts.*

Its work with children and youth includes both its work as coguardian for children in continuing care and a range of services that could impact any child in BC.

Its work with adults includes services to persons suffering from dementia, mental illness or brain injuries and persons with developmental disabilities. It is also involved with prevention of abuse, neglect and self neglect of incapable adults. The PGT also administers estates of deceased or missing persons.

The PGT administers more than \$800 million of trust assets on behalf of its clients and exercises quasi judicial authority in specific cases. It has a fiduciary duty to represent the private interests of its clients and is independent of government in its case related decisions.

For further information see the PGT [2009/2010 Annual Report](#) on its website at www.trustee.bc.ca.

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