

NEWS RELEASE

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Public Guardian and Trustee
of British Columbia

SETTLEMENTS REACHED IN EUGENICS CASES

VANCOUVER – The Supreme Court of British Columbia recently approved settlements between the BC government and nine women who were sterilized while patients at Riverview Psychiatric Hospital between 1940 and 1968. The settlements range between \$25,000 and \$100,000 plus costs. The total settlements amount to \$450,000.

Eighteen lawsuits were originally filed in 2001 by the Public Guardian and Trustee (PGT) on behalf of these individuals. In 2003, the cases went to trial and were dismissed. An appeal was brought. Two of the plaintiffs died pending the hearing of the appeal. In March of this year, the BC Court of Appeal overturned the 2003 decision in nine cases, allowing them to proceed to a new trial. The plaintiffs are all elderly women.

“It was the right time to settle these cases. Some of our clients died during these lengthy proceedings and we had to consider the age of those still living,” said Public Guardian and Trustee, Jay Chalke. “I am pleased that these individuals will be compensated without the expense and delay of yet another trial. These funds will be used to make a positive difference in their lives.”

The Public Guardian and Trustee is Committee of Estate for the plaintiffs. As Committee, the Public Guardian and Trustee protects the financial and legal affairs of adult British Columbians who, by reason of mental disability, are unable to manage their own affairs.

Thomas Berger, O.C., Q.C., who represented the Public Guardian and Trustee’s clients in these lawsuits stated, “These were complex and difficult cases. Obtaining compensation for these women so many years after this dark chapter in our province’s history is a good result.”

The Public Guardian and Trustee operates under provincial laws to protect the legal rights and financial and personal interests of individuals who cannot protect themselves, including children, adults who require assistance in decision-making and deceased or missing persons. Visit the PGT’s website at www.trustee.bc.ca for online information and services.

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