



## **F07-04-MS                      White-out Strikes Out as Severing Tool**

A man in a battle with neighbours over property borders asked the regional district for copies of correspondence it had received from the neighbours. In due course, he received a package of records with a note that some information had been severed under section 22 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* because disclosing it would be an unreasonable invasion of the neighbours' personal privacy.

This he found puzzling because it wasn't obvious that anything had been deleted from the records. There were no lines or boxes or any other marks to indicate where the severed information had been. He complained to us that, because the regional district hadn't indicated what information was missing, he was not able to assess whether his right to obtain information had been respected.

The regional district explained to us that the only information it had deleted had been contact information (address, phone number, email address) of the neighbours, and, because white-out fluid had been used to make the deletions at the beginning or end of correspondence, naturally the deletions were not visible on photocopies. The regional district agreed to release another copy of the records, using pink highlighter to mark the parts of the page where the information was severed. After receiving the revised version, the complainant told us that he considered the matter resolved.