



NEWS RELEASE

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CIVIL LIBERTIES GROUP CALLS FOR GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION AND ACTION AGAINST VANOC'S UNCONSCIONABLE EFFORTS TO STIFLE FREE SPEECH

VANOC's efforts to monopolize billboards and other advertising venues and crowd out the ability of anyone else to engage in free speech have been found out. VANOC's purchase includes all advertising space on public transit vehicles, including vehicle exteriors, transit stations and platforms, airport baggage carousels, mall posters, and outdoor billboards. Its purchases of outdoor advertising locations for the ten-week period surrounding the Olympic Games amounts to an unconscionable effort to suppress other viewpoints. Allowing government-sponsored organizations, like VANOC, to eliminate the right of others to put their message out before the public is just as offensive as would be allowing monopolies in the press and media to do so generally.

BCCLA President Rob Holmes: "We shouldn't shut down our fundamental freedoms just to have a two week sports event in 2010. The BCCLA has taken the lead in bringing to court TRANSLINK's policy barring political speech from the advertising on its facilities and having it held unconstitutional. The BCCLA has stood up against Bill 42, the BC government's gag law that limited third party advertising in elections while allowing major parties, the government and the large media concerns free rein. This time, instead of banning advertising they did not like, a government-sponsored agency seeks to buy up all of the space for any advertising so no one else can be heard. The courts have recognized the "right to be heard" as a fundamental value. VANOC's actions run counter to that. This pattern of government-sponsored efforts to stifle free speech must stop."

The BCCLA calls on the federal government and the Competition Bureau to investigate VANOC's actions. VANOC's website barks about its special legal privileges under the *Olympics and Paralympics Marks Act* and threatens others for potentially violating the *Competition Act's* ban on deceptive practices if they infringe on VANOC's trade names and marks. But VANOC appears to have ignored that same law's ban on anti-competitive activities, including "pre-emption of scarce facilities or resources required by a competitor for the operation of a business, with the object of withholding the facilities or resources from a market."

Allowing one organization to control public space in this fashion gets rid of a critical space for political speech and dissenting views. The BCCLA is particularly concerned that public space, including infrastructure funded by citizens, will be controlled by a single voice during a time when we may well expect that citizens will be looking to express different views, including those that are critical of the Games or governments.

The BCCLA letter to the Commissioner of Competition is at: www.bccla.org/othercontent/competition.pdf

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NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 19, 2009

For immediate release

BCCLA wants Vancouver 2010 police out of City Hall

Vancouver – The B.C. Civil Liberties Association has released an open letter to the Vancouver 2010 Integrated Security Unit (ISU) asking them to stay out of City Hall for intelligence gathering purposes.

A report obtained by the BCCLA indicates that three plain-clothes members of the RCMP coordinated ISU attended City Hall on January 22, 2009 to gather information about individuals attending a City Council meeting to speak against municipal Olympic initiatives. The report, released by the Vancouver Police Department, indicates that two Olympic-related agenda items were “items of interest” to the ISU, as were the names of three anti-Olympic activists on the speakers’ list.

“Having this activity occur in the context of a meeting of publicly elected officials where members of the public are entitled to attend, hear what is said and, at the appropriate juncture, speak out about matters that concern them, is troubling,” writes BCCLA President Robert Holmes in his letter to the ISU. “We would not want, and we assume that the ISU would not want, there to be any suggestion of intimidation by the presence of such officers at that kind of meeting.”

Following the public Council meeting, the three ISU officers stopped individuals who had spoken against the Olympics during the meeting ostensibly to invite them to a “consultation” process. The BCCLA has asked the ISU to stop monitoring City Hall proceedings and to approach activists for the purposes of consultation through less potentially intimidating methods.

“We call on the ISU immediately to cease its practice of monitoring the public democratic process that takes place at City Hall,” says the letter from BCCLA President Robert Holmes. “We also urge the ISU to establish contact with organizations through their established channels, rather than through spontaneous contact in venues traditionally viewed as protected from police monitoring.”

No response from the ISU has yet been received by the BCCLA. The BCCLA’s letter, which includes the full VPD report, is available on their website at www.bccla.org.

MEDIA CONTACTS

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NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
July 3, 2009 - For immediate release

Free speech faces Olympic-sized threat, says BCCLA

(VANCOUVER) - In the wake of UBC forbidding students from posting signs and posters on dorm buildings or in dorm windows "visible from the Thunderbird Winter Sports Centre" and VANOC urging cities to prohibit political leafleting or signs during the Olympic torch run, the BCCLA has come to the troubling conclusion that free speech is not welcome at the Olympics.

"Canada, B.C. and Vancouver said in our bid documents that we would honour our constitutional commitment to free speech, but they forgot to mention this right was reserved for Olympic sponsors alone," said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. "It's time for a sober second look at these anti-free speech activities, and if necessary seek review of them by our Courts."

UBC is asking students who wish to live on campus to sign a tenancy agreement which obliges the students not to post "signage or displays that create a false or unauthorized commercial association with the Olympics." The BCCLA will be working with students in September to overturn this prohibition on speech that led to confrontations during the APEC protests.

Earlier this month, 24 Hours newspaper reporter Bob Mackin obtained through a Freedom of Information Request a copy of documents drafted by VANOC identifying activities such as handing out political pamphlets or displaying political banners while the Olympic Torch Relay takes place as matters of "high concern." In response to his article, the BCCLA sent a letter to the thirty largest Canadian cities along the torch run asking for clarification three weeks ago has gone unanswered by all but six municipalities, each of which referred the issue to their legal departments.

"Such silence from Canadian mayors is very troubling and suggests they may be more interested in free tickets to Olympic events than in protecting the free speech rights of the rest of us," said Holmes. "It is unconscionable that Canadian leaders would even think about restricting the public's fundamental freedoms at a time when Canadian values will be on display to the world."

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BACKGROUND

The BCCLA has identified and spoken out about a troubling trend of anti-free speech activities by VANOC, the Vancouver Integrated Security Unit (VISU) and other government and quasi-government agencies around the Olympics.

- **Oct. 2008 – No outdoor advertising permitted by non-sponsors**
The BCCLA files a competition complaint still being considered by the Competition Tribunal concerning VANOC's purchase of all outdoor advertising space in the Lower Mainland for \$40m over the ten weeks of the Olympic period for the express purpose of only reselling it to Olympic sponsors and refusing access to non-sponsors.
- **Jan. 2009 – City seeks to punish leaflets and signs at \$10k/day**
The City of Vancouver asks for special powers to prohibit the distribution of "advertising-matter. . . if likely to be thrown or left on a street" and to enter private property to remove "illegal signs" from private property, accompanied by fines of up to \$10,000 per day. The BCCLA wrote and spoke to City Council to oppose this threat to free speech.
- **Feb. 2009 – VISU stakes out city hall, book store for dissent**
The BCCLA writes to VISU to protest against Olympic security force representatives sitting unannounced in the City Hall gallery to monitor speakers on an Olympic related issue, and visiting an independent bookstore to ask the owner to provide information about Olympic critics.
- **Jun. 2009 – Cities won't confirm free speech rights during torch run**
The BCCLA writes to the thirty largest Canadian cities to ask them whether they will enforce guidelines provided them by VANOC that suggest the distribution of political leaflets or display of political signs would be matters of "high concern." Only six municipalities respond. None of them take a position endorsing free speech rights.
- **Jun. 2009 – VPD wants protesters to register with the police dept.**
The Vancouver Police Department releases a statement that says groups planning protests during the Olympics should "contact our Operational Planning Unit," a suggestion that if enforced would be unconstitutional. The VPD also say that protesters will be allowed to "put up signs or distribute written material. . . unless the signs or their support mechanism are used as a weapon or to obstruct the vision of others."
- **Jun. 2009 – UBC repeats APEC by prohibiting student signs**
The BCCLA is notified that UBC seeks to limit student abilities to put signs in dorm windows and on outside dorm walls "in view of" Olympic venues on campus.



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
July 27, 2009

For immediate release

“We Are Not Amused” Becomes Vancouver Bylaw Standard for Punishing Free Speech

Vancouver – Yesterday the City of Vancouver passed a large package of new by-laws arguing that the new laws are “necessary” to facilitate the Olympic Games. The by-laws carve out extensive public zones in which the City can dictate massive security screenings and draconian curtailment of free expression. In a sorry effort to mask the rest of the by-laws' failings, Council deleted one blatantly unconstitutional provision which would have allowed the removal of signs on city streets that “promote an idea.” The fact that this provision made it through to Council's rushed hearing on the matter shows how little care went into reading and thinking through the whole thing. Council rammed through the package of proposals essentially unchanged from what its bureaucrats had spent months concocting.

Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA: “With Queen Victoria, behaviour at tea parties was regulated by whether the monarch was “amused” by what went on. Vancouver City Council has passed a by-law saying that anyone who causes a disturbance that affects the enjoyment of an Olympic event commits an offence. When the crowd booed the hapless judging of the skating competition in Salt Lake City in 2002 that saw the Russian team wrongly given gold when the Canadians deserved it, they were voicing freely their opinions. Under Vancouver's new bylaw, at VANOC's behest, the police will be expected to arrest anyone who does likewise. That is simply wrong. We deserve better from our elected officials.”

At the same meeting, Council refused the BCCLA's request for confirmation that political speech, banners and signs will be permitted along the Vancouver leg of the Olympic Torch relay, despite VANOC's “guidelines” which stipulate “high concern” about “propaganda” and “local politicians distributing pamphlets.”

Elected officials engage in doublespeak when they mouth that citizens' rights will be respected during the Olympics while enacting laws that look like Beijing 2.0. VANOC has made clear by its actions that it doesn't want the Games sullied by what it calls “propaganda” but the rest of us in Canada call “free speech”. So, when Council purports to empower itself with laws prohibiting persons causing a “disturbance or nuisance” on city land, there's a pretty good bet that while pro-Olympics screaming and wailing at whatever decibel will be given a pass, everything else, from criticisms of bad calls by Olympic judges to criticism of some participating countries will find themselves declared a “disturbance”. These bylaws exempt signs “celebrating” the Olympics from sign prohibitions, so it's not rocket science to figure out that this is going well beyond the stated purpose of protecting the commercial interests of licenced sponsors.

Robert Holmes: “Council assures us that these extraordinary laws, which include allowing the City Manager to make additional rules at whim, without accountability or oversight, won't trample citizens' rights. Their assurances have no legal weight and Council, by passing these bylaws, has lost its moral authority to speak for Vancouver. The laws are as they've passed them, not as they describe

them. And these laws are ripe for constitutional challenge for violation of freedom of expression, association, assembly, security of the person and the right to be free of unreasonable search and seizure.”

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NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
August 12, 2009

For immediate release

Integrated Security Unit refuses to release street closures to Vancouverites

The BC Civil Liberties Association has been forced to release unofficial street closure data obtained through Freedom of Information requests after requests to the security unit for the Olympics to provide more accurate and timely information were ignored.

“We sent a clear letter to the Integrated Security Unit, which includes senior management from the Vancouver Police Department, and which is in regular contact with VANOC, highlighting our concern about the discrepancies in the information made available to the general public and the information we obtained through our Freedom of Information requests,” said Carmen Cheung, Counsel at the B.C. Civil Liberties Association. “We asked it to release the detailed street closures we know they anticipate, giving it a month to reply. It has ignored our request, as it has ignored the concerns of the public and businesses needing this information.”

In response to its Freedom of Information requests, the BCCLA received copies of applications by various officials to the City of Vancouver for street closures during the Olympics, which included detailed information about parking and resident access. Compiling this information with other information released through administrative reports accompanying the City’s new bylaws, the BCCLA has been able to assemble a partial list of anticipated closures for public release.

“Only the ISU knows completely what the closures will be around the Games and the restrictions for home care workers, employees and residents inside security perimeters,” said Cheung. “There are only six months until the Olympics, and residents and businesses still don’t have access to adequate information to plan for closures of streets around their homes, offices and stores.”

[FOI request 1 >>](#)

[FOI request 2 >>](#)

[FOI request 3 >>](#)

The BCCLA has compiled information from publicly available maps on the City of Vancouver and VANOC web pages, and documents received through an Access to Information request made to the Vancouver 2010 Integrated Security Unit.

The roads highlighted in blue will be subject to some form of closure/restricted access during

some portion of the Olympic Games period (from January to March, 2010). Neither the accuracy nor completeness of this information is guaranteed.

[Bayshore >>](#)

[Downtown >>](#)

[Hillcrest Park >>](#)

[John Hendry Park >>](#)

[Olympic Village >>](#)

[PNE >>](#)

[UBC >>](#)

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NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
September 16, 2009

For immediate release

Legal observer teams trained to hit the streets in 2010

Vancouver, B.C. – If the BCCLA and Pivot get their way, more than 100 pairs of eyeballs will be on the streets of Vancouver during the 2010 Olympics watching for rights violations by the more than 7,000 police officers, 5,000 private security guards and 4,500 members of the Canadian armed forces.

The organizations announced a collaboration on a legal observer training program for the 2010 Olympics that launches this Sunday with a training at the Britannia community centre at 2:30 p.m. Members of the public are welcome to attend the training and volunteer to become legal observers. They can register by e-mailing info@bccla.org.

“Our observers will be there to record any rights violations, and while we hope that they’re bored during the Games, we suspect they’ll be busy,” said BCCLA President Robert Holmes, who listed protester rights to free speech, the rights of spectators to wear the clothing they choose inside venues, and the right to be free from unreasonable search and seizure as key concerns.

The BCCLA also released a number of documents obtained through freedom of information request that outline what they say is an International Olympic Committee agenda to interfere with Canadian rights to free speech.

“Individually, the documents are offensive but could be seen as an overzealous mistake,” said Holmes. “When assembled, however, they paint a dire picture of an international organization that feels Canadian rights and freedoms are secondary to their motive of profit from the Olympic franchise.” Workshops to train observers will be held September 20, October 11, November 22 and December 6, all at 2:30 p.m. and all at the Britannia Community Centre on Commercial Drive.

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Backgrounder – Anti-Free Speech Primary Documents

As part of their press conference, the BCCLA released a number of documents that they say outlines the anti-free speech agenda of the Swiss-based International Olympic Committee and the Integrated Security Unit.

The Olympic Torch Run Manual that calls on cities to limit the distribution of political leaflets during the torch run: [Read >>](#)

The Clean Venue Agreement that outlines a VANOC swat team that will seize offensive literature on public property, how the IOC required VANOC to prevent anyone other than Olympic sponsors from advertising during the Games, and how private security guards will prevent people from holding signs or wearing clothes with political messages in Olympic venues: [Read >>](#)

The Olympic Host City Agreement in which the IOC required the City of Vancouver to prevent international media and attendees at Olympic venues from seeing political speech inside and outside the venues, which was signed by then Mayor of Vancouver Larry Campbell: [Read >>](#)

The Olympic Charter in which the IOC dictates at Rule 51 that “No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas. [Read part 1 >>](#) [Read part 2 >>](#)

The Manual for Candidate Cities which demands compliance with the terms of the Olympic Charter for all candidate host cities, including Vancouver, during and after the bid process. [Read >>](#)

The Olympic Technical Manual on Media, in which the IOC attempts to limit coverage of the Games to coverage that “by its content, spreads and promotes the principles of Olympism,” and which grants the IOC the ability to withdraw accreditation from any journalist at any time for any reason. [Read >>](#)

Letters in which the Olympic Integrated Security Unit and Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) refuse to refrain from using Agents Provocateur or to assume the leadership of activist organizations, following a request from the B.C. Civil Liberties Association to forswear the tactics. Such tactics may be permissible under certain interpretations of Canadian criminal and constitutional law, but their legality is disputed by the BCCLA. [Letter to CSIS >>](#) [CSIS response >>](#) [Letter to ISU >>](#) [ISU response >>](#)

Backgrounder – Legal Observer materials

Training sessions for legal observers take place on Sundays, starting September 20, at 2:30 at the Britannia Community Centre. Observers will be trained in a two hour session, and will be scheduled for shifts in pairs during the Olympic period.

Workshops to train observers will be held September 20, October 11, November 22 and December 6, all at 2:30 p.m. and all at the Britannia Community Centre on Commercial Drive. Additional workshops in the new year will be advertised on the BCCLA and Pivot Legal Society websites. The Legal Observer Training Manual is available online [here >>](#)



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
September 16, 2009

For immediate release

“Trust us” not good enough, BCCLA tells VANOC

Vancouver, B.C. – A recent press release from the Vancouver Olympic Organizing committee attempting to stem a growing tide of concern over free speech rights and the Olympics isn't good enough says the BCCLA.

The release, dated September 16, defends VANOC and the International Olympic Committee's clampdowns on free speech as “entirely consistent with international sporting event norms” and in a spirit of “respect for freedom of expression in balance with the celebration of sport.”

“VANOC has signed contracts that incorporate many alarming anti-free speech provisions and mailed anti-free speech guides to municipalities on the torch run,” said BCCLA Vice-President Jason Gratl. “The words ‘respect for freedom of expression’ don't come to mind when considering their track record to date.”

The BCCLA today announced their partnership with Pivot Legal Society in introducing legal observers who will monitor potential rights violations during the Olympic Games, along with a package of documents obtained through Freedom of Information requests authored by or signed by VANOC that purport to limit free speech in and around Olympic venues.

“We're not packing our bags simply because VANOC says ‘trust us,’” said Gratl. “When their press release that says they respect free speech defends telling spectators what messages they can wear on their clothing, protest pens ‘facilitated by police’, and the suggestion that anti-free speech activities to protect Olympic sponsors is ‘in the public's best interest,’ we know we still have work to do.”

MEDIA CONTACTS:

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David Eby, Executive Director, (778) 865-7997

Backgrounder – The text of the VANOC Press Release

From: Jennifer Young <Jennifer_Young@vancouver2010.com>

Date: September 16, 2009 10:16:02 AM PDT (CA)

To: Jennifer Young <Jennifer_Young@vancouver2010.com>

Subject: Free speech, athletes competing at their best and spectator enjoyment at the 2010 Winter Games

Good morning.

Please find attached a press release for your immediate use. This will also be posted to the wire and our website shortly in both French and English.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,
Jennifer

COPY:

September 16, 2009

A BALANCE OF INTERESTS: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN PUBLIC SPACES, ATHLETES COMPETING AT THEIR BEST AND SPECTATOR ENJOYMENT AT THE 2010 GAMES

Vancouver, BC - The Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) is working closely with its partners to provide a reasonable balance of interests at the 2010 Winter Games including freedom of expression in public spaces; the protection of Olympic marks and Games sponsors against commercial infringement and ambush marketing; and venues where athletes can compete at their very best before spectators who can fully enjoy the events.

The following outlines VANOC's position and intentions on freedom of expression in public areas, commercial rights management and the terms and conditions of attendance at Games venues, which are entirely consistent with international sporting event norms:

I. Respect for Freedom of Expression in Balance with the Celebration of Sport

- VANOC and its partners respect every citizen's right to freedom of expression as protected by Canadian law.
- VANOC also recognizes the need to find the balance for all; including respecting and protecting the rights of athletes, spectators and sponsors, as agreed to when Canada won the right to host the 2010 Winter Games.

II. Outside Ticketed Games Venues

A) Demonstrations

- For those who wish to use the 2010 Winter Games to draw attention to areas of their interest, our security partners will ensure peaceful, lawful and safe public demonstrations can occur outside of the venues in plain sight of the media and the public.
- Safe assembly areas for this purpose are being proposed by Vancouver 2010 Integrated Security Unit (VISU) and they will be facilitated by the police of jurisdiction outside a ticketed Games venue.

B) Safe Assembly Areas

- Safe assembly areas are being developed under three guiding principles: safety, proximity and visibility.

- Safe assembly areas for demonstrations are options for demonstrators to ensure they have a safe space reserved for them which is in plain view of the public and the media accessing the venues.
- Demonstrators are not required to use safe assembly areas, but they will be made available to ensure a clear space is maintained for demonstrations in the busy environment around each venue.
- The location and size of the safe assembly areas will be announced closer to Games time, as planning for the venues continues.

C) Commercial Activity

- VANOC has an obligation to protect to the Games sponsors and that it is in the public's best interest to protect the almost \$1 billion investment by these sponsors.
- Outside the venues volunteers monitoring commercial activities will only identify commercial infringement and ambush marketing, and due process with the appropriate authorities will be followed on a case by case basis.

III. Inside Ticketed Games Venues

A) Athlete Performance and Spirit of Celebration

- The 2010 Winter Games will be a celebration of sport, culture and sustainability; inside the venues this must be the priority above all commercial, political, religious or other statements.
- Athletes and other Games participants have earned the right to focus entirely on the competition at hand.
- The Olympic Charter states that no demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda of any kind is permitted inside any venue for the Olympic or Paralympic Games. This includes limiting any advertising by our Games sponsors in the field of play. This is to ensure that the Games remain focused on celebrating sport and Olympic values.

B) Ticket Terms and Conditions

- The Ticket Terms and Conditions for Olympic events are consistent with those that already exist for previous Olympic Games and for other major international sporting celebrations such as World Cups and Commonwealth Games.
- Ticket Bearers agree to the full terms and conditions of their tickets including that admission shall not be used to engage in political, commercial, advertising or other promotional activities.

Further information on:

- **Advertising and commercial activities as part of VANOC's commercial rights management program** can be found at <http://www.vancouver2010.com/en/about-vanoc/the-vancouver-2010-brand/protecting-the-brand/-/32798/1i3nwix/index.html>
- The full **terms and conditions accepted by tickets bearers for 2010 Games events** can be found at <https://images.vancouver2010.com/images/tms/TicketLicenseAgreement.html>
- **VISU's organization of safe assembly areas at the 2010 Games** can be found at <http://v2010isu.com/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=516&languageId=1&contentId=6821#faq-sp-venues>
- **City of Vancouver temporary bylaws** during the 2010 Games can be found at <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/BYLAWS/bylaw1.htm>

- The sections in the **Olympic Charter** that govern the staging of the Olympic Games in the areas outlined above can be found in Rule 51 on page 98 of the Olympic Charter at http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf

- 2010 -

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NEWS RELEASE

October 7, 2009
For immediate release

BCCLA helps activists sue City over Olympic gag law

Vancouver, B.C. – The B.C. Civil Liberties Association is supporting two activists in challenging the constitutionality of the City of Vancouver’s recently passed Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games By-law.

“The bylaw is an affront to free speech. Its purpose and effect is to limit citizens’ rights to express dissenting views and to hear dissenting views on public property,” says David Eby, Executive Director of the BCCLA. Eby cited concerns about the bylaw restricting signs that aren’t “celebratory” and listing public facilities and even a city park as places where free expression is limited as particularly offensive.

The lawsuit is being filed by Dr. Chris Shaw, a professor, and Alissa Westergard-Thorpe, a student. They are being represented by Vancouver lawyers Jason Gratl and Robert Holmes.

“Vancouver's Olympic bylaw is an infringement on my Charter rights and those of all people who wish to express themselves and to listen,” said Dr. Shaw. “If the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is to be a guarantee of anything, if it is to be more than words on paper, this bylaw cannot be allowed to stand.”

In court documents filed today, both Shaw and Westergard-Thorpe say they intend to criticize the 2010 Olympic Games through signs, leaflets, and merchandise at the sites listed in the bylaw. They are asking the Court to declare the bylaw’s offensive provisions unconstitutional and order that the City of Vancouver be prevented from enforcing them.

“Going to Court on a clear-cut free expression issue is a waste of time and money,” said Westergard-Thorpe. “We’ve all got better things to do, but if the City insists on passing bad bylaws, people who value free speech have no choice but to stand up and challenge them.”

[Statement of claim >>](#)

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Alissa Westergard-Thorpe, (778) 668-0790



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
October 8, 2009

For immediate release

Olympic police reps to get legal observer training

Vancouver, B.C. – Both the Vancouver Police Department and the Integrated Security Unit for the 2010 Olympic Games have accepted the B.C. Civil Liberties Association's offer to provide legal observer training to senior officers.

"It's gold medal news that the two police forces responsible for securing the Games want to be fully briefed on this very important accountability program," said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. "Through this special training, we hope to ensure that the neutral, independent, accountable role of our legal observers is respected in 2010."

In September, the BCCLA made a written offer to both the Vancouver Police Department and the Integrated Security Unit to provide them with identical training to that received by civilians participating in the joint BCCLA / Pivot legal observer program. In addition, the BCCLA offered to provide photographs of uniforms and copies of all training materials to the police forces in order to ensure that the observer role was fully understood by security teams.

"The more that front line officers are aware of this program and it is demystified for them, the safer our observers are and the more easily the observers will be able to do their critically important work," said Holmes. "Some steps taken by government and VANOC have shown less respect for basic freedoms than the law requires. But this move by law enforcement agencies is a positive sign and we applaud it."

Holmes noted that Vancouver will be under considerable international scrutiny during the Games, and suggested Vancouver could be a showcase for how democratic rights are respected at international events.

A date has yet to be set for the special law enforcement legal observer training.

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NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
October 9, 2009

For immediate release

BCCLA condemns unlucky B.C. Government Bill 13

Vancouver, B.C. – The B.C. Civil Liberties Association today condemned the BC government's Bill 13 proposals to allow Richmond, Whistler and Vancouver to enter residences and other private property with only 24 hours notice to remove or cover up signs during the Olympic period.

The amendments to the *Municipalities Enabling and Validating Act (No. 3)* introduced in the legislature apply only to the three Olympic cities over February and March 2010. Another amendment changes the *Vancouver Charter* to permit fines for sign and bylaw violations of up to \$10,000 per day and imprisonment for up to 6 months. Previously, people had 14 days to comply with the bylaw, and fines were \$2,000 per day.

"It used to be that a person's home was his castle, but now the local governments want to storm the citadel of every castle to take down signs they regard as offensive to their Olympic plans," said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. "Telling people who exercise free speech that local authorities may barge in, rip down signs inside your property, fine you or throw you in jail will underscore the growing impression that our governments care more about their own camera appearances at Olympic events than about people's rights."

The provincial law is at first reading and has not yet passed. If the law passes, municipalities would need to enact their own bylaws to take advantage of the new powers granted.

"If Vancouver acts on this provision, people will be risking \$10,000 a day fines and 6 months in jail just to criticize the Olympics," said Holmes. "6 months in jail is usually reserved for criminals who have a record of several convictions for breaking and entering, but now it's government that wants to break in."

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NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
October 20, 2009

For immediate release

City tries delay tactics to stall court challenge on bylaws

Vancouver, B.C. – A press release and a letter to the B.C. Civil Liberties Association show that the City is working hard to avoid having controversial anti-free speech bylaw provisions get to Court before the Olympics. Two activists, Chris Shaw and Alissa Westergaard Thorpe, in partnership with the BCCLA, have filed a lawsuit challenging the bylaws.

“We don’t know why the City would wait until the 11th hour, almost literally, to respond to our concerns,” said BCCLA Executive Director David Eby, who believes the City now recognizes the bylaws they’ve passed are unconstitutional. “We’ve had to help activists file a lawsuit to challenge this unconstitutional bylaw before we could be taken seriously. After making a mockery of our concerns in the media, the City now appears to be trying to buy time so that our lawsuit can’t get to court.”

The letter to the BCCLA received late Friday from the City’s legal department says that the court challenge to the Bylaws is “moot” because the City is planning on making unspecified amendments. The press release makes promises that the City will not include provisions that would jail people for posting illegal signs, and suggests that amendments may be “considered” and other sections “clarified” on an indeterminate schedule. The BCCLA has not seen the text of any proposed amendments.

“These bylaws were passed at the last minute, with limited public input,” said Eby. “The time for amendments and consultation was July at the latest, not three months before the Olympics. We don’t have the time or the inclination to wait and see how close the City wants to cut their constitutional duties to protect free speech.” With only three months to go before the Olympics, there is almost no time to get a Court to consider the provisions that were introduced in July, 2009. The lawyers on the lawsuit are finalizing a draft application to shorten timelines so that the matter can get to Court before February 2010.

[Letter from City of Vancouver law department >>](#)

[Letter from BCCLA to City of Vancouver law department >>](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS:

David Eby, Executive Director, BCCLA (778) 865-7997
Alissa Westergaard Thorpe, plaintiff, (778) 668-0790



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
October 22, 2009

For immediate release

BCCLA partners with UBC students for 2010 Olympics

Vancouver, B.C. – The B.C. Civil Liberties Association announced today that they are partnering with the Student Legal Fund Society (“SLFS”) at the University of British Columbia to introduce an Olympic legal preparedness program for UBC students. The SLFS was established after the APEC protests of 1997 to support student access to campus and student rights through litigation and legal education.

“We are thrilled to be partnering with this organization that has its roots in one of the most notorious student rights violations in UBC history,” said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. “We laud their decision to partner with us in trying to ensure peaceful and lawful exercises of free expression, observance of events and prevention of conflict, and avoid using resources to respond via litigation after the fact.”

The BCCLA is matching a contribution of \$18,550 by the SLFS to hire a part-time student liaison worker who will coordinate the delivery of 11 workshops over five months training at least 330 students, half in “know your rights” and half in legal observing. The funding includes guaranteed student access to a hotline with pro bono legal assistance during the Games, twenty-five student legal observer teams to observe security force conduct at the Thunderbird Arena and elsewhere on campus, and reporting mechanisms for UBC students to report unusual activity.

“By being as transparent as possible about the goals of this program, and by working with students, administration and security forces in partnership, we aim to contribute to the creation and maintenance of an atmosphere where APEC-like issues are never repeated,” said Holmes.

The BCCLA is currently hiring a part-time coordinator of the program. Those with experience working with student groups and administration at UBC are encouraged to apply. Given the short timelines, resumes and cover letters are due by Monday, October 26 and can be e-mailed to info@bccla.org. Not all who apply will be called for an interview.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Emily Griffiths, SLFS, (778) 835-2846
Rob Holmes, President, (604) 681-1310 or (604) 838-6856
David Eby, Executive Director, (778) 865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
October 26, 2009

For immediate release

Legal Observers in Victoria for 2010 Olympic torch launch

Vancouver, B.C. – The B.C. Civil Liberties Association will have five teams of legal observers present in Victoria for the launch of the Olympic torch run. The observer program is designed to ensure that security forces participating in the 2010 Olympics do not exceed their authority in securing Games venues and events, and the torch run will be their first time to take the streets.

“Last week, Prime Minister Harper said ‘I would not support any actions in the name of security that stifle political free expression,’” said BCCLA President Robert Holmes. “When he was opposition leader, Gordon Campbell said, ‘Shame on a government that will deny free speech and gag full participation of all British Columbians in our democratic processes.’ We expect government and the law enforcement community to show the world how our democracy can host an international event and live up to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

The BCCLA Legal Observer program has already been a significant success, with almost 100 people trained in legal observing over only two workshops. The BCCLA had anticipated training only 100 people over all five scheduled workshops and have revised their estimates to plan for up to 300 trained observers in place before February 2010.

David Eby, Executive Director of the BCCLA, will be headed to Victoria with the observer team to ensure best practices are developed for the launch of the Olympic Games. He identified issues such as the legality of handing out leaflets, protest pens, and the treatment of anti-Olympic banners as potential issues. “We’re still developing our practices for recording and storing evidence collected by Observers,” said Eby. “This isn’t just the launch of the torch, it’s the launch of a really exciting accountability program for our Association and supporters.”

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Robert Holmes, President, BCCLA (604) 681-1310

David Eby, Executive Director, BCCLA (778) 865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
October 29, 2009

For immediate release

B.C. government plans to remove homeless to shelters

Vancouver, B.C. – The BC Civil Liberties Association criticized the provincial government’s *Assistance to Shelter Act* that was introduced today, as a band-aid approach that could easily be used to displace the homeless from high-visibility areas in time for the Olympics.

“If the Minister is truly concerned that people are outside without shelter, he should open enough shelter beds to serve B.C.’s street homeless population, and he should call off his lawyers in the *Adams* case, who argue that the homeless shouldn’t be able to protect themselves from the elements when shelters are full,” said BCCLA president Rob Holmes.

The *Adams v. Victoria* case is a constitutional lawsuit against the City of Victoria by a group of homeless advocates that argues when shelters are full, homeless people should be able to set up tents and other shelters to stay warm and dry. The provincial government has intervened in that case to argue that there is no right for homeless individuals to take such steps.

“In Vancouver alone there are 1500 homeless people, and only 1300 shelter beds,” noted Holmes. “This shortage of beds means that police can’t force all of the homeless into shelters, so just those most visible in tourist, business or residential areas will be arrested. The problems with such a plan are obvious.”

The BCCLA continues to argue that this legislation will force the homeless who wish to stay outside into hiding, putting them out of reach of police, passersby and outreach workers who are often the people who find homeless people in medical distress, thereby increasing – not reducing – harm to the homeless.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Rob Holmes, President, (604) 681-1310 or (604) 838-6856
David Eby, Executive Director, (778) 865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
November 9, 2009

For immediate release

BCCLA demands policy for VPD Olympic sonic gun

Vancouver, B.C. – A representative for the Vancouver Police Department confirmed to the BCCLA last week that the VPD has acquired an LRAD (Long Range Acoustical Device) crowd control weapon for the 2010 Olympics. He advised that the VPD would be using the device to ensure that police instructions were clearly heard. The sonic gun fires a concentrated beam of sound at its targets that can cause hearing damage and temporarily disrupt vision.

BCCLA President Robert Holmes pointed out that even as the Taser inquiry has not yet reported back, police are acquiring another high tech device that could be used to cause grievous pain. "This crowd control weapon was obtained without any public discussion and without any defined policy for its safe and proper use being set in advance. Tasers were also brought in through such an ill-considered and backwards approach."

To the knowledge of the BCCLA, there have been no public discussions around the purchase and use of an LRAD in Vancouver or British Columbia, no Canadian safety testing of the device, no Canadian approval of the device's use by any agency independent of Canada's police services, and the device has never before been used in a protest scenario by police in Canada.

"On October 22, Vancouver Police Chief Jim Chu said that 'No extraordinary effort will be made to restrict protest because of the Olympics,' but his force is buying new and untested weapons," said Holmes. "A City Councillor said that we were out of line for noting the parallels with Beijing, but Vancouver joins China in embracing these devices. The secret purchase and implementation of the LRAD, in conjunction with Vancouver passing a bylaw that suppresses free expression, reduces the credibility of blandishments from city officials about not interfering with lawful and peaceful demonstrations."

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Robert Holmes, President, BCCLA (604) 681-1310 or (604) 838-6856
David Eby, Executive Director, BCCLA (778) 865-7997

Backgrounder

The BCCLA has confirmed that the Vancouver Police Department has either obtained, or is in the final steps of obtaining the following two new “tools” for use during the 2010 Olympics.

Armoured personnel carrier - <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20080527/documents/a10.pdf>

On May 27, 2008 the Vancouver Police Department asked Vancouver city council for a one time \$95,000 payment to purchase a bulletproof armoured personnel vehicle. The grant was approved. The total cost of the vehicle was \$345,000, and the remainder of the cost was paid by the Vancouver Police Foundation. Inspector Tony Zanatta of the VPD was quoted as saying: “It’s not a tank, it’s a tool. It’s simply that. It’s a shield, it’s a ballistic shield that’s mobile.”

The LRAD sonic weapon - <http://www.atcsd.com/site/content/view/220/110/>

The VPD confirmed that they had acquired a used LRAD device at a meeting between VPD representatives and members of the BCCLA on November 5, 2009. Media reported on the first North American crowd control LRAD use against protesters at the G20 protests in Pittsburgh in September 2009. It has been used extensively for crowd control by repressive authorities elsewhere in the world. The People’s Republic of China has recently purchased large numbers of LRADs. Purchases like those and endorsements by police in cities like Vancouver have led the manufacturer to announce an anticipated “third consecutive year of record revenues.”

American Technology Corporation, the manufacturer, says that LRAD systems can “transmit powerful deterrent tones.” The sonic gun fires a concentrated beam of sound at its targets that can cause hearing damage and temporarily disrupt vision. Its specifications provide for 152 decibels at 1 meter, allowing for it to be heard 3 kilometers away. ATC says it is “effectively” heard up to 1.25 km away even with up to 88 decibels of background crowd noise.

Other common crowd control weapons that the BCCLA expects will be in the VPD armoury but which we have not been able to confirm will or won’t be available in 2010:

Flexible baton round / “Bean Bag Round” / Rubber Bullets

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/206089.pdf>

The flexible baton round is a small fabric pillow, plastic bullet, wooden dowel, or rubber projectile fired from a normal 12 gauge shotgun or 37/40 millimetre gas launcher, which distributes the normal impact of a shotgun round in an attempt to minimize long-term trauma and penetration of the bullet. In 373 incidents studied by the U.S. Department of Justice, 10 caused fatal injuries, two as a result of police officers mistakenly firing live munitions rather than impact munitions as intended.

CS gas / CN Gas / CR Gas / “Tear Gas”

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/publications/studies/19991401a_en.pdf

Used heavily in Quebec City during the FTAA protests, “tear gas” refers to a class of aerosol based crowd control agents that create a burning sensation in the eyes and a heavy flow of tears. Certain agents, in particular CR gas, can result in temporary blindness.

Pepper spray / OC Spray

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/publications/studies/19991401a_en.pdf

Made infamous at APEC, this spray causes uncontrollable coughing and gasping for breath as well as temporary blindness.



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
November 17, 2009

For immediate release

VPD disables sonic gun in response to BCCLA objections

The Vancouver Police Department has responded to BCCLA demands that it refrain from using their newly acquired LRAD sonic gun as a weapon against protesters by disabling the device's weapons feature, according to a media release issued today.

"We're glad to see that the VPD has recognized that purchasing a military grade weapon without public consultation or policy does not inspire confidence in their intentions in the lead up to the Olympics," said David Eby, Executive Director of the BCCLA. "They've made the right call by taking this use-of-force option off the shelf."

The BCCLA uncovered the secret purchase of the LRAD in a meeting with senior VPD officials, and the VPD thanked the BCCLA in a media conference for raising the issue publicly. Until today, despite assurances that they would not use the weapon capability, the VPD did not commit to disabling that function or take the option to use the LRAD as a weapon completely off the table.

"This was an appropriate response although there will surely be some difficult questions for the Chief at tomorrow's Police Board meeting about why the weapon was purchased and introduced without letting the Police Board know about it, and without having guiding policy in place," said Eby

The BCCLA thanks the VPD for correcting this oversight so promptly, and urges the Police Board to require all new weapon acquisitions to pass through formal Police Board oversight to avoid such a situation from arising in the future.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

David Eby, Executive Director, 778-865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
November 25, 2009

For immediate release

BCCLA calls on VANOC to remove restriction on artists

The BCCLA is calling on the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee (VANOC) to withdraw a clause in its artist contract that limits free expression. The clause requires artists to “refrain from making any negative or derogatory remarks respecting VANOC, the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Olympic movement generally, Bell and/or other sponsors associated with VANOC.”

“If VANOC were a purely private corporation, one could understand these kinds of provisions,” said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. “But VANOC gets a huge amount of government funding, government appoints 11 of the 20 members of the board, and government directs the business plan of VANOC. How can our government attempt to limit artists’ free expression in this way?”

The artistic director for the Salt Lake City Olympics was quoted by CTV as reporting that there was nothing that censored artists in relation to anything artists wished to say about the Olympics.

“We are calling on VANOC to notify all artists that it is has signed to this contract that VANOC will not rely on this clause, and that artists, if they wish, are free to criticize VANOC, the 2010 Olympic games, the Olympic movement generally, and sponsors,” said Holmes. “Critique is one of the key roles of artists. Art without free speech is simply propaganda.”

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Robert Holmes, President, 604-838-6856
David Eby, Executive Director, 778-865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
December 2, 2009

For immediate release

BCCLA endorses report, says Olympic police can do better

The BCCLA announced its general support for a series of recommendations issued by the 2010 Olympic Civil Liberties Advisory Committee today, but added that the recommendations ought to go further to ensure free speech and free assembly rights are protected in and around the Winter Games venues and corridors between them.

“These recommendations are a valuable contribution to the ongoing dialogue about the impact on civil liberties leading up to, during and after the 2010 Winter Olympics are held in Vancouver. We want to express our sincere thanks to the committee for their hard work,” said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. “With that said, the BCCLA would go further, including recommending the abolition of the so-called ‘safe assembly areas’ and recommending that undercover police be prohibited both from inciting wrongful acts and from infiltrating and leading in the planning of protests.”

The Civil Liberties Advisory Council (“CLAC”) was a “blue ribbon panel” of a retired provincial court judge, and academics with expertise in security and legal issues assembled by the BCCLA. Completely independent of the BCCLA, the CLAC met with the Integrated Security Unit, City of Vancouver, and VANOC, among others, to discuss civil liberties issues.

“The most important recommendation CLAC has made is that VANOC and security forces cannot hope to satisfy civil liberty concerns by purporting to stay within the black letter of Canadian law,” said Holmes. “They have a duty to live up to the spirit of the law and preserve the rights of Canadians to express themselves around the Olympics. Hopefully, this report will persuade them to recognize and respect that.”

[Click here to review the CLAC report.](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Robert Holmes, President, 604-838-6856

David Eby, Executive Director, 778-865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
December 11, 2009

For immediate release

City orders anti-Olympic mural removed from Gallery

The City of Vancouver has shut down the public art space that has existed, uninterrupted since 2003, in front of the Crying Room gallery at 157 East Cordova Street following the posting of an anti-Olympic mural.

“Given the long and uninterrupted display of public art at this gallery, the tolerance of the City to date, the content of the mural, and the stipulations of the IOC and VANOC in limiting anti-Olympic expression, it certainly appears to be more than simple coincidence that the City has chosen this mural, at this time, to take exception to the Gallery’s actions,” said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA.

The City issued a notice to the landlord of the Gallery suggesting that the anti-Olympic mural was graffiti and contravened the City’s restrictions on graffiti, and ordering the mural removed. The BCCLA has written a letter to the City of Vancouver, expressing disappointment that the City has targeted this expression, apparently based on the content of the sign.

“We urge you to review your processes to ensure that this does not happen again,” wrote Holmes in the letter, “Although we are losing confidence in your political will to ensure that all voices are heard during the Olympic period despite your repeated public assertions to the contrary.”

Other displays mounted by the Crying Room, since 2003, can be viewed at www.thecryingroom.com

A photo of the mural ordered removed by the city can be viewed at: http://www.flickr.com/photos/blackbird_hollow/3960151488/

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Robert Holmes, President, 604-838-6856
David Eby, Executive Director, 778-865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
December 21, 2009

For immediate release

Police reserve the right to take over activist groups for 2010

Vancouver, B.C. – In a letter promising that undercover police officers and agents will not provoke others into violence, the head of the 2010 Olympic police force has refused to promise that his undercover officers won't take over and direct the activities of activist groups, or commit illegal acts themselves.

“We are pleased to hear, at a minimum, that the people we pay to enforce the law have promised they won't encourage others to break it,” said Holmes. “However, it is less reassuring to note what has been left out of the list of promises we were seeking from the ISU on this issue.”

The BCCLA has repeatedly tried to get the head of the Vancouver Integrated Security Unit Bud Mercer to commit to basic rules of conduct for undercover officers, including that no undercover officer will seek to influence the political direction, policy positions or internal discussions of any police infiltrated groups, and that officers not engage in illegal conduct themselves that could cause bodily harm or death. To date VISU has only agreed to refrain from activities that “provoke others into committing illegal acts.”

“It is absurd that in Canada we can't get a commitment from the head of the police that their undercover agents won't assume the leadership or try to influence the political direction of activist groups,” said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. “What kind of democracy do we have where the public cannot be assured that those speaking out against or in favour of a political issue are not undercover police officers?”

[See the letter from the BCCLA and response from the ISU >>](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Rob Holmes, President, (604) 681-1310 or (604) 838-6856
David Eby, Executive Director, (778) 865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association

Vancouver, B.C. – The BCCLA is endorsing the statement of Canadian and International researchers who study “mega-event” security. Surveillance and privacy experts have called on Canada to “moderate the escalation of security measures for Vancouver 2010” and to be as transparent as possible about security and surveillance practices. The statement also calls for an independent and public audit of Olympic security and surveillance measures post-Games and to have full and open public discussions about proposed “legacies” such as public video surveillance. .

Originally estimated at \$175 million, the security budget for the 2010 Games is now approximately \$1 billion. The BCCLA successfully garnered assurances from the Vancouver Police Department that it would not use recently acquired sonic weapons on Olympic protesters and has established the first independent Olympics legal observer program to monitor the security and policing of Olympic protesters. But there remain many questions regarding security measures planned and some that may linger on after the Olympics.

Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA: “The Olympics presents security challenges. But security measures must always be proportionate. Citizens’ rights must be guaranteed. We must not allow “extraordinary” security and surveillance measures to become our new norm. After the APEC fiasco in Vancouver 12 years ago, Commissioner Hughes reported that, “The fact that a visiting leader may be merely upset or angered by the expression of contrary political views and criticism by Canadians does not justify the suppression of such expression.” He found the police crackdown there inappropriate and said it did not show “respect for the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.” We should not repeat mistakes – we should learn from them.”

For the Vancouver Statement of Surveillance, Security and Privacy Researchers about the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games see:

http://www.surveillanceproject.org/Vancouver_Statement



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
January 25, 2010

For immediate release

Activists call off Olympic free speech lawsuit

Activists backed by the BCCLA in a lawsuit to protect their free speech rights against Olympic bylaws passed by the City of Vancouver have officially withdrawn their case as a result of amendments made to the bylaw by the City of Vancouver.

"The original signage bylaw passed in July 2009 was an offense to civil liberties," said Chris Shaw, one of the two plaintiffs in the lawsuit. "Our lawsuit caused the city to think more critically about civil liberties in context to the Olympics. The new bylaw, while by no means perfect, is considerably better. This outcome is a significant victory for Charter rights, not only for Olympic protesters, but for all of those who live in this city."

In December, the City of Vancouver passed an amended set of bylaws that changed every section named by Shaw and co-plaintiff Alissa Westergard-Thorpe in their lawsuit. The most contentious part of the bylaw, that banned signs that didn't celebrate the Olympics over huge swaths of the downtown core, was completely deleted.

"Now that we have fought to maintain most of our rights to political expression, the public needs to come out during the Games and voice what the City has tried to silence - dissent around the Olympics," said Westergard-Thorpe.

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association remains concerned about the implementation of various sections of the revised bylaw, and will be watching carefully through its legal observer program to ensure City officials do not infringe the free expression rights of Vancouverites.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Dr. Chris Shaw, Plaintiff, 604-875-4111 ext 68373 or cell 604-710-8291

Alissa Westergard-Thorpe, Plaintiff, 778-668-0790

David Eby, Executive Director, BCCLA, 778-865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 9, 2010

For immediate release

“Free speech zone” crowded with pro-Olympic displays

Vancouver, B.C. – The BCCLA is disappointed that the organizers of the 2010 Olympics have crowded an area designated for free speech with pro-Olympic displays, making large demonstrations practically impossible in the Olympic city.

“Beijing created protest zones where people who wanted to protest could peacefully assemble,” said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. “But the Vancouver Olympics organizers seem to think that even the tiny patch of green behind the Vancouver Art Gallery is too much to allow for those who don’t agree with the Olympics.”

The Civil Liberties Advisory Committee which met with the Integrated Security Unit, Vancouver City Hall, and VANOC had recommended the North lawn of the Vancouver Art Gallery be kept clear and available for public organizing, recognizing the traditional use of the space as a gathering point for rallies and demonstrations. The recommendation appears to have been completely ignored, as the space now features a pro-Olympic poster display, a provincial government log cabin, and a bobsled.

“Free speech needs air and room in which to be spoken and heard,” said Holmes. “With this effort to crowd out others, the Olympics organizers are offending the Canadian democratic principles that our governments committed themselves to uphold. For an organization supposedly dedicated to competition among athletes to be so fearful of competition of ideas is sad indeed. Speakers will be deprived of the right to express themselves and listeners deprived of their right to hear. This is a sorry start to the Olympics and must be quickly overturned by those in authority.”

This tactic of trying to block out the opportunity for others to communicate a message was used by VANOC in the fall of 2008 when it purchased all outdoor advertising in Vancouver and Whistler and resold it only to approved sponsors. The Hughes Commission into demonstrations related to APEC made recommendations that demonstrations not be unreasonably confined.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Robert Holmes, President, (604) 681-1310
David Eby, Executive Director, (778) 865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 10, 2010

For immediate release

Provincial government shuts BCCLA out of international media centre

Vancouver, B.C. – The Provincial Government has told the BCCLA that the human rights organization's communications are not welcome at the "International Media Centre" (IMC) during the Olympics. The refusal to distribute the BCCLA's media release comes months after the BCCLA's original request to communicate with the media at the IMC.

"Apparently Google launching a special Olympic street view is an appropriate press release, but the BCCLA launching a special Olympic legal observer program is not," said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. "Government has used public dollars to corner the market on international media; it's hardly appropriate for them to use those public resources to censor the messages that media receives."

The IMC is hosted by B.C.'s 2010 Winter Games Secretariat and includes a press conference and press release distribution system for the Olympics that they have made open to the public and local and international businesses. After making a general inquiry, the BCCLA was invited to submit a press release via the online application process by a representative of the Olympic Secretariat.

In exchanges that lasted over three months, the BCCLA requested access to the media at the IMC multiple times, but were not finally refused access until February 9, just three days before the opening ceremonies.

"If we'd had a refusal right at the beginning because our message was inappropriate for the centre, we could have had that discussion and still had time before the Olympics," said Holmes. "What this appears to be instead is that the provincial government strung us along and then shut the door just 72 hours before the opening ceremonies."

Government representatives refused to respond to the BCCLA's requests for explanation about the reason for the refusal by press time. [Read email >>](#) [Read letter >>](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Robert Holmes, President, (604) 681-1310
David Eby, Executive Director, (778) 865-7997

BACKGROUND

- December 11, 2009** BCCLA sends a general e-mail inquiry to the Olympic Secretariat requesting access to the media at the IMC.
- December 11, 2009** An IMC representative responds and advises a reply will be coming shortly.
- December 17, 2009** Sarah Harrison, Communications Director for the Olympic Secretariat, writes and invites the BCCLA to submit their request via the online system established for the IMC.
- December 17, 2009** The BCCLA submits their application via the IMC online system requesting press release distribution and access to hold press conferences.
- December 22, 2009** The BCCLA's online request is confirmed received by the IMC and the BCCLA is advised that preliminary approval for requests meeting BCMC requirements (which are unlisted) will be issued by four days earlier, December 18, 2009.
- January 18, 2010** The BCCLA writes to request information on the status of their request.
- January 18, 2010** An Olympic Secretariat representative asks that someone reply to the BCCLA.
- January 22, 2010** The BCCLA writes to request information on the status of their request and notes nobody has responded to the January 18 e-mail.
- January 25, 2010** Sarah Harrison writes to advise that they are unable to guarantee space to the BCCLA for press conferences due to a high volume of requests and advises that the BCCLA is still being considered for press conference space but cannot get a firm commitment currently.
- January 27, 2010** The BCCLA writes to ask about the status of the request for press release distribution.
- January 27, 2010** Sarah Harrison asks that the BCCLA resend the press release, and the BCCLA does so.
- February 2, 2010** The BCCLA writes to ask about the status of the request for press release distribution.
- February 8, 2010** The BCCLA writes to ask about the status of the request for press release distribution.
- February 9, 2010** Sarah Harrison writes that the IMC will not distribute the BCCLA's press release.
- February 9, 2010** The BCCLA writes to ask why the release will not be distributed. No reply is received.



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 12, 2010

Media Advisory

Legal Observers' Highlights: Opening Ceremonies & First Big Demonstrations

Vancouver, B.C. – Legal Observers trained by the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association took to the streets to monitor the Games' Opening Ceremonies and the "Welcome" protest march. The Observers are hundreds of citizen volunteers who observe and record security and policing activities at the Olympics. This media briefing will report on the policing of the Games' kick-off and one of the largest of the planned demonstrations protesting the Olympics.

What: Press Conference on Legal Observers' reports from the Opening Ceremonies and "Welcome" protest march.

Who: BCCLA staff and volunteer Legal Observers who monitored and recorded the events

When: 12:00 noon, Sunday February 14, 2010

Where: 1188 West Georgia Street (Media personnel will be met in the lobby and escorted to the third floor board room)

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Micheal Vonn, BCCLA Policy Director: 604-630-9753

FOR MORE DETAILS: media@bccla.org or 604-630-9755

BACKGROUND

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NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 13, 2010

ATTENTION EDITORS: The previously announced Sunday, February 14 press conference at the BCCLA has been cancelled. The next briefing is scheduled for Monday, February 15, 2010 at 8:00 a.m. at 1188 West Georgia Street.

BCCLA pleased with policing at Opening Ceremonies demonstration, Observers record few issues

Vancouver, B.C. – A full contingent of Legal Observer teams monitored the policing of the demonstrations at the Olympics Opening Ceremonies. The large demonstrations that started at the Vancouver Art Gallery were notably peaceful. Restrained policing and protest marked the procession of the march to BC Place Stadium. Very few incidents involving police were observed, with the exception of a police barricade push-back that was unannounced and the fact that the majority of RCMP officers attending were not wearing legible badge numbers or names for accountability purposes.

"We were very pleased with the effective and restrained policing of the demonstrations that we observed prior to and during the Opening Ceremonies," said BCCLA Policy Director Micheal Vonn. "We know that the Legal Observers contributed significantly to the success of these demonstrations. We were thanked by many people attending and were told by some that our presence gave them the confidence that the events would be safe and their rights respected."

The Legal Observers were asked by event organizers not to attend the "Heart Attack" demonstration on Saturday, February 13. Several arrests were reported by media to have taken place at this event. Event organizers did call on the Legal Observers during the event. Although our Observers attended as quickly as possible, the crowd was largely dispersed by the time we arrived. Aside from witnessing and documenting police in full riot gear and with an array of armaments, we have no reports from this event and little footage to share.

Our Observers will be participating in the Murdered and Missing Women Memorial March tomorrow (Sunday) and preparing for the homeless tent city protest (Monday) as well as sharing video highlights from the Opening Ceremonies demonstration and several smaller events, on Monday, February 15, 2010. All 8 a.m. press conferences are held at 1188 West Georgia.

As always, BCCLA staff and board members are available for comment on civil liberties issues, including as they relate to the Olympics.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Micheal Vonn, BCCLA Policy Director: 604-630-9753

FOR MORE DETAILS: media@bccla.org or 604-630-9755



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 14, 2010

MEDIA ADVISORY: BCCLA to release Observer footage to date, report on police conduct

Vancouver, B.C. – The BCCLA will be reviewing and releasing police footage to date as well as reporting on police conduct at a number of recent events as observed by the BCCLA Legal Observer program, as well as reporting on upcoming events at a press conference tomorrow. Footage will also be available online for download as of noon via press release and the BCCLA website.

What: Press Conference on Legal Observing results to date

When: 8 a.m. Monday, Feb. 15th, 2010

Where: 1188 West Georgia Street

Who: David Eby, Executive Director, BCCLA

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Micheal Vonn, BCCLA Policy Director: 604-630-9753

FOR MORE DETAILS: media@bccla.org or 604-630-9755



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 15, 2010

For immediate release

Police visit media centre, observer office

Vancouver, B.C. – Uniformed members of the Vancouver Police Department and two uniformed members of the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) walked through the ground floor of an independent Olympic media centre and tried to enter private offices in the back before being asked to leave by building management.

They did not produce any search warrant and said they had attended to view an art show that was taking place in the building. During their self-guided tour of the W2 Culture and Media House, they entered the technical hub of the building, which services more than 100 journalists and the Legal Observer program for the 2010 Olympics, and appeared to be attempting to access upper floors that host the Observer Program.

"The police are well aware that this space is dedicated to media, and that the Legal Observer office is in this building as well," said David Eby, Executive Director of the BCCLA. "All of the groups in this space have positive relationships with the police, there is no need for this kind of show of force."

Officers from the CBSA have been seen at all of the major demonstrations to date by the BCCLA's legal observers, raising concerns that VISU is using nationality to target particular protesters.

"In light of a number of issues at the border involving those who disagree with the Olympics being detained, harassed or turned back, it's hardly reassuring that the CBSA is on the front lines policing these protests and visiting media and Observer spaces," said Eby.

The BCCLA will be sending the details of the incident to the Vancouver Police Department to request a formal explanation.

View video: <http://vimeo.com/observers2010> >>

MEDIA CONTACTS:

David Eby, Executive Director, (778) 865-7997
Micheal Vonn, Policy Director, (778) 829-3471



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 15, 2010

Media Advisory

Policing of the Tent City Protest and StopWar Demonstration

Vancouver, B.C. – The Legal Observers trained by the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association are monitoring major demonstrations occurring during the Olympic period and giving daily media briefings on the events. The briefing on Tuesday, February 16th will overview the policing of the previous day's Tent City Protest and the StopWar anti-militarization parade.

What: Press Conference on Legal Observers reports from the Tent City Protest and Anti-War Demonstration

Who: BCCLA staff and volunteer Legal Observers who monitored and recorded the events

When: 8:00 a.m., Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Where: 1188 West Georgia Street (Media personnel will be met in the lobby and escorted to the third floor board room)

MEDIA CONTACT:

Micheal Vonn, BCCLA Policy Director: 604-630-9753 or 778-829-3471

FOR MORE DETAILS: media@bccla.org and <http://bccla.org/temp/media.html>



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 16, 2010

For immediate release

BC Civil Liberties Calls on Canadian Border Services to Explain their “Inland” Patrols

ATTENTION EDITORS: The previously announced daily press briefings at 8:00 a.m. at 1188 West Georgia are cancelled. Press briefings will be announced by media advisory.

The BCCLA is calling on the Canadian Border Services Agency to explain the presence of “inland” patrols in downtown Vancouver which are increasingly being noted by the BCCLA Legal Observers.

Legal Observers attended at yesterday’s major demonstrations which proceeded peacefully: an anti-war demonstration that took place at the Vancouver Art Gallery Monday evening and an anti-houseless demonstration took place at noon. The housing demonstration culminated in a “tent village” that is situated in a vacant lot in the 100 block of West Hastings Street. While all went well at these events, the Legal Observers are noting policing changes.

Micheal Vonn, Policy Director, BCCLA: “We are sensing a shift in the policing culture of the public demonstrations, in particular we are noting the presence of Canadian Border Services Agents patrolling public space. We are unclear on their authority and mandate and ask the CBSA to clarify for the public what they are doing patrolling our downtown streets.”

The Legal Observers have also seen Corrections Officers present at demonstrations and will be seeking clarification on this as well.

Vonn: “We are seeing an edgier tone to the policing of the demonstrations with increased incidents of our Legal Observers being pointedly photographed and addressed by name by police officers who are apparently interested in letting our volunteer citizen observers know that the police have gone to some effort to identify them.”

MEDIA CONTACTS:

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David Eby, Executive Director, BCCLA, 778-865-7997



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
February 19, 2010

For immediate release

BCCLA to VPD: Leave the big guns at home for demos

Vancouver, B.C. – The BCCLA has asked the Vancouver Police Department to stop bringing semi-automatic military weaponry to demonstrations in Vancouver, even where demonstrations present public order issues.

“Even in a scenario like Saturday where a group of protesters engage in illegal property damage, as well as reprehensible violence against police and citizens, the Police were able to restore order without pepper spray, tear gas, rubber bullets, Tasers or handguns,” said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. “Do they really need military grade semi-automatic rifles?”

The BCCLA has monitored police action over a number of major public order events over many years, including the Guns and Roses riot, the so-called “Riot at the Hyatt”, and the Stanley Cup riot. Saturday is the first instance the BCCLA is aware of where military guns have been deployed for civilian crowd control purposes in Vancouver.

“High powered rifles in a stressful situation add to the risk of law enforcement and security measures going seriously wrong,” said Holmes. “The public has not been told of any security threat that would justify the presence of such weaponry. Just as the sonic gun raised controversy last fall, so too the presence of these weapons should be explained and, unless absolutely necessary, they should be withdrawn.”

Vancouver Police Department public order officer Vince Forsberg confirmed that the weapons were deployed to back up Crowd Control Unit police officers who do not carry firearms, and said that he understood them to be “intermediate weapons” designed “to allow an accurate shot at an intermediate range (usually under 100 meters).”

[Video >>](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS:

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