

NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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Experts Gather to Discuss Border ID Documents and Identification Policy

A research team is gathering experts from three countries to identify challenges to Canadian identity policy. With growing concerns about border management, terrorism, illegal immigration and travel security, there are increasing pressures for new identification techniques to be introduced.

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association and the American Civil Liberties Union have worked with the London School of Economics and the University of Toronto to convene today's meeting. The research event brings together government, industry, academic and civil society representatives.

Micheal Vonn, Policy Director of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association: "The costs of getting a new ID system wrong are astronomical. Canada obviously has huge political and economic pressure in regard to border security, but we can't ignore the massive financial, political and privacy costs of not thinking this matter through. We have other countries to look to and learn from."

In almost every country where a national identity policy has been introduced, as with Australia in the 1980's and the UK Identity Card recently, public support is originally quite high – above 80% - but falls away as problems and costs become apparent. Canada has shown a far lower level of initial support at 53%.

Gus Hosein, London School of Economics: "Even changes to existing forms of ID need to be thoroughly assessed. When the European Union decided to include a fingerprint requirement for EU passports it didn't initially think through the implications of having EU citizens' fingerprints inadvertently shared with governments of countries those citizens visited. Every shift in design and decision over specification has significant ramifications."

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