

NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
Friday, May 25, 2007

BCCLA RENEWS CALL FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION OF CIVILIAN DEATHS

In light of revelations at the Coroner's Inquest into the death of Ian Bush, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association is renewing its call for timely, independent, civilian led investigations whenever an individual dies while in the custody of or being pursued by the RCMP.

BCCLA President Jason Gratl: "The unforgivable failings of the RCMP's homicide investigation of one of its own members demonstrates again that the RCMP's priority in a crisis is to protect its own. We need a level of public accountability strong enough to penetrate that culture of self-protection."

The coroner's inquest into Mr. Bush's death is revealing disturbing potential flaws in the investigation of the incident including the destructions of notes, unwarranted delays into the taking of statements, autopsies and investigative interviews, improper treatment of evidence including neglecting key witnesses and destruction of physical evidence, and potential bias of experts. Some of these flaws were revealed in the coroner's inquest for Kevin St. Arnaud earlier this year.

The BCCLA has a policy of automatically making complaints to the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP (CPC) in order to promote police accountability. The CPC, a civilian body, has the legal authority to undertake its own investigations of complaints. The BCCLA has now made complaints into the death of six men who have died in RCMP related incidents since January 2005: Kevin St. Arnaud, Ian Bush, Gurmeet Sandhu, Ryan Snopek, Donald Lewis, Christopher Jickets and Daniel King.

The BCCLA made a complaint into the death of Ian Bush shortly after his death. The RCMP terminated our complaint, a decision that was upheld by CPC Chair Paul Kennedy who then initiated his own complaint. The BCCLA has taken the CPC to Federal Court.

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