



News Release

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Montebello Summit

Freedom of expression and the right to demonstrate must be respected

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association and the Ligue des droits et libertés are calling on authorities to ensure that demonstrators' rights will be protected at the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) Summit, where heads of state and business leaders will be meeting on August 20-21, 2007 in Montebello, Quebec.

Grace Pastine, Litigation Director of the BC Civil Liberties Association: "Not only must protesters be able to draw public attention to their demands, they must be able to make their protests heard by the leaders they are addressing. They must be allowed to protest in Montebello."

Police tactics used during previous demonstrations raised the concern of U.N. authorities. In 2005, both the U.N. Human Rights Committee and the U.N. Committee Against Torture expressed concern about repeated allegations of inappropriate methods used by federal and provincial police forces during demonstrations. Both international bodies recommended that authorities investigate their policies concerning crowd control measures to ensure that the right to peacefully participate in social protests is respected.

Specifically, the Committee Against Torture noted that it continues to receive allegations that law enforcement authorities inappropriately use chemical, irritant, incapacitating and mechanical weapons. The Human Rights Committee declared that Canada must make certain that it respects the freedoms guaranteed by the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* by ensuring that only protesters committing criminal offences during demonstrations are arrested.

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The B.C. Civil Liberties Association and the Ligue des droits et libertés say that policing measures that arbitrarily prohibit or limit demonstrations, for example by establishing “no-go” protest zones, are an impermissible interference with citizens’ rights.

Representatives of the RCMP and the *Sûreté du Québec* have not publicly stated whether “no-go” protest zones will be established during the SPP, and there are conflicting reports on the precise security measures that will be in place. The *Sûreté du Québec* announced that there will be a security perimeter of 2.1 km. Authorities also declared that all roads to Montebello will be closed to visitors who are considered "undesirable." The *Sûreté du Québec* and the RCMP did not exclude the possibility of establishing a larger security perimeter.

Grace Pastine: “Freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are guaranteed by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The world is watching to see if Canada will respect the rights of its citizens.”

Contacts:

La Ligue des droits et libertés:

Gaetan Blais, media relations officer
514-715-7727 (cell phone)
info@liguedesdroits.ca

B.C. Civil Liberties Association

Grace Pastine, Litigation Director
604-630-9751
grace@bccla.org