



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION DECRIES SECRET CONSULTATIONS**

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association is calling on the Premier to direct the Solicitor General and Attorney General of British Columbia to throw out a controversial confidentiality agreement parties are made to sign to participate in the consultation process about proposed amendments to the *Police Act*. The government invited the BCCLA and others to participate in consultations, but then demanded that participants keep secret everything said and done both before and *after* the introduction of any bill in the Legislative Assembly. In addition, parties involved in this would be under an obligation of confidentiality regarding the mere existence of the consultations.

BCCLA President Rob Holmes: "What kind of "open" government holds secret consultations about the *Police Act* or any other legislative proposal? Demanding that people swear an oath never to talk about what they heard and discussed with government during this so-called "consultation process" is unfair. The public will always wonder who got their say and who influenced the process."

The government has so far refused to open up this process. As a result, the BCCLA has refused to sign the unreasonable and overreaching undertaking the government is extracting from those it chooses to invite into this process.

In 1998, then opposition leader Gordon Campbell wrote: "When government does its business behind closed doors, people will invariably believe that government has something to hide. Secrecy feeds distrust and dishonesty. Openness builds trust and integrity." In their 2001 "New Era" platform, the BC Liberals promised to bring in "the most open, accountable and democratic government in Canada."

The BCCLA has historically been at the forefront of consultations with government regarding improvements to the police complaint system to enhance police accountability. The Association has over 45 years of experience in working on civil liberties issues including police accountability.

For a copy of the BCCLA's letter to the government, the government's response and the undertaking, visit: [http://www.bccla.org/othercontent/08Undertaking\\_response.pdf](http://www.bccla.org/othercontent/08Undertaking_response.pdf);  
[http://www.bccla.org/othercontent/08Sol\\_General\\_response.pdf](http://www.bccla.org/othercontent/08Sol_General_response.pdf);  
[http://www.bccla.org/othercontent/08Govt\\_Undertaking.pdf](http://www.bccla.org/othercontent/08Govt_Undertaking.pdf)

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