



## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION GRANTED LEAVE TO INTERVENE IN IMPORTANT HOMELESS RIGHTS CASE**

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) was granted leave to intervene in an important homeless rights case before the British Columbia Supreme Court. The case is scheduled for four days this week in Victoria, beginning today.

At issue in the case is whether the City of Victoria's bylaws, which prevent homeless individuals from erecting shelters to protect themselves from the elements when sleeping outside, violate the Charter rights of the homeless and Canada's international obligations.

Ron Skolrood, lawyer for the BCCLA: "Sleeping outdoors without shelter has serious adverse consequences for a person's health and safety. Victoria's bylaws interfere with the ability of individuals to access adequate shelter, a fundamental necessity of life."

The problem of homelessness is growing, and it is part of a national trend. The City of Victoria Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness estimated that there were approximately 1,500 homeless people in Victoria in 2007, and that during peak capacity, the number of shelter beds and mats on floors could accommodate only up to 326 people.

Grace Pastine, BCCLA Litigation Director: "There simply aren't enough shelter beds in Victoria and people are forced to sleep outdoors and in public spaces. Telling homeless people that have nowhere else to go that they can sleep outside but they can't protect themselves from the elements places the homeless in an impossible situation."

The BCCLA is Canada's leading defender of civil liberties. The BCCLA takes the position that adequate shelter is a fundamental necessity of life. The BCCLA recognizes the potentially catastrophic effects of homelessness on civil liberties, including the right to vote, the right to secure government benefits or essential services, the right to security of the person, and the right to participate in the democratic life of the community.

Ron Skolrood of Lawson Lundell LLP is the lawyer for the BCCLA.

– 30 –

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