



## NEWS RELEASE

### BCCLA says Translink shouldn't unleash plan for sniffing transit users

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**Vancouver, British Columbia** – The British Columbia Civil Liberties Association says that Translink's proposal to introduce police dogs to sniff transit users is unjustified and will violate people's rights. Translink's plan, calling for the introduction of police sniffer dogs on Skytrain and select transit stations, was announced today. No date for implementation was announced.

"This represents a massive intrusion into the rights of transit users. Authoritarian regimes use animals to control people. We are supposed to be readying Vancouver as a showcase to the world of a peaceful and democratic country. Yet once again a security measure is being sprung on us without consultation or debate. Will anyone really believe that this proposal to engage in mass searches of the public is driven by anything other than the Olympics?" asked Rob Holmes, President of the BCCLA. "This is as bad or worse than the Victoria police stopping and screening all users of public transit on Canada Day, frisking them to check for alcohol."

The Supreme Court of Canada held recently that the *Charter of Rights* protects us all against unreasonable searches, saying that right "expresses one of the core values of our society: respect for personal privacy and autonomy." One case involved searches at a Calgary bus depot. Evidence obtained in violation of that right was excluded. Generalized searches and searches without probable cause were condemned.

"The heavy handedness of this plan is not justified by Translink's own report on public safety on public transit in Vancouver. No pressing need for having dogs sniffing everyone using public transit has been demonstrated. Having more police officers making more frequent appearances on their beat at higher-risk Translink locations appears to be a much more prudent use of public funds."

"There is no policy in place at Translink concerning appropriate use of sniffer dogs. Translink got in trouble earlier this year because of its ill-considered policy on taser use and how it had used tasers in relation to fare evaders. It seems to have learned nothing from that," said Holmes.

The BCCLA is writing a letter to Translink and the Solicitor General of B.C. objecting to the proposal. Holmes indicated that his organization would examine the possibility of legal action if Translink decided to press ahead with the plan.

**For more information, please contact:**

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