



## NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

### **Police Complaint Commission finds Canada Day searches unlawful**

The Commission for Public Complaints against the RCMP has condemned the practice of mandatory and indiscriminate searches during large events. The ruling comes from a complaint made by the BCCLA about searches that took place during 2008 Canada Day celebrations in Victoria, BC. The BCCLA initiated a police complaint to address concerns that searches and seizures were not conducted and reported lawfully.

“The Commission’s report and accompanying legal opinion is thorough, thoughtful and balanced,” says BCCLA Caseworker Jesse Lobdell. “It notes the difficulties faced by police during large public events, but makes clear that sweeping, mandatory searches, even with consent, are unlawful.”

The Commission’s report was unequivocal in denouncing mandatory searches, concluding that “the RCMP’s participation in preventative and early interdiction liquor strategies in B.C. be limited to police presence and that searches only be conducted when the RCMP members have the requisite grounds under the applicable legal authority.”

The report came to this conclusion after noting that such practices violate fundamental rights contained within the common law and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The comprehensive report addressed problems not only with searches, but also the seizure of lawful property and the reporting of such seizures.

“This report can only serve to assist policy-makers who seek to develop lawful and effective law enforcement strategies,” says Jesse Lobdell. “When British Columbia greets Olympic crowds, law enforcement agencies will hopefully have developed operational plans that do not rely on the violation of visitors’ and citizens’ rights.”

The Victoria Police Board has signalled its intention to incorporate the findings of the report into their 2009 operational plan in a letter to the BCCLA.

[Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP report >>](#)

[Letter from the Victoria Police Board >>](#)

[Original letter of complaint >>](#)

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