



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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City agrees with BCCLA submissions on noise maker to deter “vagrants”, strikes from budget

The City of Vancouver listened carefully to the BCCLA’s and other community groups’ concerns Wednesday at City Hall and agreed to reject a proposal to install “Mosquito” noise making devices in city-owned parking lots. City Council voted to strike a \$147,000 line item in the 2009 parking lot capital budget allocated to purchasing “noise maker(s) to deter vagrants from congregating in stairwells.”

The noise making devices are produced under the brand name “Mosquito.” The Mosquito produces a loud, high pitched noise which is designed to be so aggravating that anyone within range will move to avoid hearing it. Mel McKinney, general manager of EasyPark, the City-owned parking lot operator, told Council that the “Mosquito” was needed in order to prevent people from using injection drugs, defecating, and sleeping in EasyPark stairwells.

The BCCLA presented several concerns regarding use of the Mosquito to Council through a letter from President Robert Holmes, and in person through intern Cameron Funnell, including questions related to the effect of the devices on infants and those with hearing aids, concerns related to compliance of the devices with City noise bylaws, and concerns about the effect on future regulation of the devices if the City was an early adopter of using noise to move “undesirable” populations along.

The Mosquito has been installed in over 3,500 locations in the UK, where many of the devices are designed to be age targeting against youth. Noise frequencies are often set such that only those under 25 can hear the device; such targeting is possible because the ability to hear high frequencies naturally deteriorates with age. The website of the distributor of the device in B.C. advertises it as an “ultrasonic youth deterrent.”

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