



NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

BCCLA helps activists sue City over Olympic gag law

Vancouver, B.C. – The B.C. Civil Liberties Association is supporting two activists in challenging the constitutionality of the City of Vancouver’s recently passed Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games By-law.

“The bylaw is an affront to free speech. Its purpose and effect is to limit citizens’ rights to express dissenting views and to hear dissenting views on public property,” says David Eby, Executive Director of the BCCLA. Eby cited concerns about the bylaw restricting signs that aren’t “celebratory” and listing public facilities and even a city park as places where free expression is limited as particularly offensive.

The lawsuit is being filed by Dr. Chris Shaw, a professor, and Alissa Westergard-Thorpe, a student. They are being represented by Vancouver lawyers Jason Gratl and Robert Holmes.

“Vancouver's Olympic bylaw is an infringement on my Charter rights and those of all people who wish to express themselves and to listen,” said Dr. Shaw. “If the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is to be a guarantee of anything, if it is to be more than words on paper, this bylaw cannot be allowed to stand.”

In court documents filed today, both Shaw and Westergard-Thorpe say they intend to criticize the 2010 Olympic Games through signs, leaflets, and merchandise at the sites listed in the bylaw. They are asking the Court to declare the bylaw’s offensive provisions unconstitutional and order that the City of Vancouver be prevented from enforcing them.

“Going to Court on a clear-cut free expression issue is a waste of time and money,” said Westergard-Thorpe. “We’ve all got better things to do, but if the City insists on passing bad bylaws, people who value free speech have no choice but to stand up and challenge them.”

[Statement of claim >>](#)

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