



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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For immediate release

Proposed Police Act amendments target watchdogs

Vancouver – The B.C. Civil Liberties Association blasted proposed changes to the British Columbia *Police Act* saying that the changes target watchdogs and limit their participation, force complainants to sit down with police officers they are complaining against, and still exempts all documents in the complaint process from *Freedom of Information* requests.

“Some of these changes may help the Commissioner do his job, but they sure don’t increase transparency or accountability to the public,” says David Eby, acting Executive Director of the BCCLA. “It’s impossible for me to understand why this new Act requires the Commissioner to shut watchdogs out of the process as soon as someone directly affected also makes a complaint.”

Eby suggests that another section of the Act will limit participation by members of the public. The “Resolution by Mediation” section requires complainants, except with special permission, to sit down with the police officer complained against if the Commissioner deems it helpful.

“Many of the individuals that the BCCLA has assisted with complaints are leery of participating in the process to begin with,” says Eby. “How can our office tell people, ‘Sure, if you want to make a complaint, you just have to meet with the officer you’re complaining against, and swear yourself to secrecy about the meeting,’ it’s ludicrous.”

The latest amendments still do not address the BCCLA’s long standing concern that police not investigate police. A new section does, however, require the Police Complaint Commissioner to appoint an external police force to investigate in custody deaths rather than permitting members of the same force to investigate themselves.

The Act does have some beneficial amendments, including the ability for the Police Complaint Commissioner to replace a Discipline Authority (usually a Chief of Police) if the Authority is not making appropriate decisions on discipline or disposition of a complaint, and is stronger than the RCMP complaints process, which still governs the majority of police officers in B.C.

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