



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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RCMP change policy after BCCLA complaints

Following a series of complaints made by the BCCLA about the RCMP ending in custody death conduct investigations before the investigations were complete, the RCMP notified the BCCLA yesterday that it had changed its policy of early termination of these investigations.

“We’re glad to hear that the RCMP is taking its responsibilities seriously when it comes to professional conduct investigations surrounding in custody deaths,” said Robert Holmes, president of the BCCLA. “While we still believe that civilians should be conducting these investigations, we are glad to hear that at least these investigations are now happening.”

Formerly, the RCMP policy was to terminate internal investigations of complaints made about officers’ conduct during police-involved deaths in the event a criminal or coroner’s investigation began. Now, the RCMP policy appears to be that they will continue their own internal investigations. In only ten days in 2007, the RCMP moved to close conduct investigations into four deaths of prisoners in their custody in British Columbia before the investigations were complete. The BCCLA filed appeals, upheld last week, against all four decisions to close off the investigations early.

The RCMP advised the BCCLA via e-mail that they had changed their policy in April of 2008, following the interim reports of the Commission for Public Complaints against the RCMP concerning the BCCLA complaints. According to the RCMP:

In April 2008 E Division Professional Standards changed their practice regarding termination of serious public complaints which include in custody deaths and police shootings, based on the facts there was an ongoing criminal investigation and a coroner’s inquest. This practice was changed based on our review of Interim Reports from the Chair of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP.

“Hopefully, the results of those investigations will be for the benefit not just of the RCMP internal processes, but also for the criminal, coroner’s, police complaint commissioner’s and public’s benefit through a timely, transparent and open approach to accountability,” said Holmes.

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