



## NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association  
October 29, 2009

For immediate release

### **B.C. government plans to remove homeless to shelters**

**Vancouver, B.C.** – The BC Civil Liberties Association criticized the provincial government’s *Assistance to Shelter Act* that was introduced today, as a band-aid approach that could easily be used to displace the homeless from high-visibility areas in time for the Olympics.

“If the Minister is truly concerned that people are outside without shelter, he should open enough shelter beds to serve B.C.’s street homeless population, and he should call off his lawyers in the *Adams* case, who argue that the homeless shouldn’t be able to protect themselves from the elements when shelters are full,” said BCCLA president Rob Holmes.

The *Adams v. Victoria* case is a constitutional lawsuit against the City of Victoria by a group of homeless advocates that argues when shelters are full, homeless people should be able to set up tents and other shelters to stay warm and dry. The provincial government has intervened in that case to argue that there is no right for homeless individuals to take such steps.

“In Vancouver alone there are 1500 homeless people, and only 1300 shelter beds,” noted Holmes. “This shortage of beds means that police can’t force all of the homeless into shelters, so just those most visible in tourist, business or residential areas will be arrested. The problems with such a plan are obvious.”

The BCCLA continues to argue that this legislation will force the homeless who wish to stay outside into hiding, putting them out of reach of police, passersby and outreach workers who are often the people who find homeless people in medical distress, thereby increasing – not reducing – harm to the homeless.

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Rob Holmes, President, (604) 681-1310 or (604) 838-6856  
David Eby, Executive Director, (778) 865-7997