



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
September 21, 2009

For immediate release

BCCLA uncovers plan to turn homeless shelters into jails

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association has uncovered four documents that suggest the provincial government is in the final stages of preparing legislation to compel the homeless to remain in homeless shelters during the 2010 Olympics.

The documents suggest that police officers would be able to use force and jail the homeless that refuse to attend and remain in homeless shelters under the proposed *Assistance to Shelter Act*. The legislation is to be tabled in this legislative session.

“This legislation turns our homeless shelters into jails, with shelter employees as the guards,” said Tom Sandborn. “Forcing someone to move out of a tent into a pew at First United or some other half measure shelter only makes sense in the context of clearing the streets for the Olympics.”

The documents obtained originate from within the provincial government and include two e-mails and two memos concerning the initiative. One of the memos is titled “Major Issues” and expresses concerns about the constitutionality of the proposed Act, liability for police officers, and the amount of force that is permitted to be used by police in enforcing the law.

The other memo, titled “Proposed process to assist persons to shelter” outlines that a declaration of extreme weather would be made, notice would be given to the homeless, a police officer would engage with the homeless person and order them to seek shelter. If the homeless person refuses, a process that “enables the police officer to use force” would start. The memo concludes that “As a last resort, the individual may be taken to police cells, either voluntarily or involuntarily.”

“The obvious outcome of this legislation will be our homeless hiding to avoid detection where they are at significantly increased danger, but are less of an eyesore for the Olympics,” said Sandborn. “The intent of this legislation isn’t to protect, but to clean up.” [Read memos >>](#)

For more information, contact:

Tom Sandborn, Board Member, (604) 224-1182