



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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For immediate release

BCCLA asks VPL to overturn right to die presentation ban

Vancouver, B.C. – The Vancouver Public Library is inappropriately restricting free speech by preventing a right to die group from discussing suicide methods with members of the public says the BCCLA.

“In Canada, people have the right to hear information that others may find objectionable,” says Jason Gratl, Vice-President of the BCCLA. “The library, as a public facility, needs to provide equal and non-discriminatory access to its facilities for presentations of all kinds of information. If the library won’t provide space to engage in these difficult discussions, who will?”

Exit International is an Australian-based international right to die group whose book, *The Peaceful Pill Handbook* is a bestseller on the website Amazon.com, but is banned in Australia. When the group attempted to book space for a lecture at the Vancouver Public Library, they were refused access. The library administration advised the group that, based on the library’s interpretation of the description of the planned program on Exit International’s website, the talk would likely violate the Canadian Criminal Code.

“Nobody is promoting or encouraging suicide at the VPL,” said Gratl. “Open and public discussion about death and dignified means of dying may make us squeamish, but they are not unlawful.”

The proposed Exit International presentation is in two parts. The first part discusses the politics of the right to die issue and is open to the public. The second half of the presentation is only open to those with terminal illnesses and those who are 55+ and discusses in detail methods of committing suicide. The Library has objected only to the second part of the presentation.

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