



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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For immediate release

Vancouver Public Library bans suicide discussion

Vancouver, B.C. – Last night the Vancouver Public Library Board confirmed the decision of library management to ban a scheduled discussion on assisted suicide at the VPL main branch. Australian group Exit International had booked a room to present a workshop based on their bestselling book *The Peaceful Pill Handbook*.

Chief Librarian Paul Whitney called the BCCLA this morning to communicate the Board's decision which was made at an *in camera* session based on a legal opinion they refuse to release.

"Free speech surely means at the very least that the library should communicate the legal reasons for why they won't let this conversation go ahead," said BCCLA Executive Director David Eby. "Usually public librarians are our valued partners in many fights in favour of free speech and against the banning of books. We're stumped as to why they've made this regressive decision on a discussion that needs to happen."

The BCCLA offered to make access to an online version of the Exit International workshop and book available to the VPL Board and VPL lawyers to review so that the library could make an informed decision. The book is freely available at booksellers in Canada and through the online website Amazon.com, and the workshop is based entirely on the book. The offer was not taken up.

"First the library board decided in private that the public couldn't discuss suicide, and now they're telling us it's based on a secret legal opinion," said Eby. "Is the VPL embarrassed about their choice of lawyers, or is it the legal opinion itself that is worth hiding?"

Exit International will be holding a workshop in Vancouver on Wednesday, November 4, 2009 at 11:00 am at the Unitarian Church at 49th and Oak.

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