



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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For immediate release

Legal Observers in Victoria for 2010 Olympic torch launch

Vancouver, B.C. – The B.C. Civil Liberties Association will have five teams of legal observers present in Victoria for the launch of the Olympic torch run. The observer program is designed to ensure that security forces participating in the 2010 Olympics do not exceed their authority in securing Games venues and events, and the torch run will be their first time to take the streets.

“Last week, Prime Minister Harper said ‘I would not support any actions in the name of security that stifle political free expression,’” said BCCLA President Robert Holmes. “When he was opposition leader, Gordon Campbell said, ‘Shame on a government that will deny free speech and gag full participation of all British Columbians in our democratic processes.’ We expect government and the law enforcement community to show the world how our democracy can host an international event and live up to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

The BCCLA Legal Observer program has already been a significant success, with almost 100 people trained in legal observing over only two workshops. The BCCLA had anticipated training only 100 people over all five scheduled workshops and have revised their estimates to plan for up to 300 trained observers in place before February 2010.

David Eby, Executive Director of the BCCLA, will be headed to Victoria with the observer team to ensure best practices are developed for the launch of the Olympic Games. He identified issues such as the legality of handing out leaflets, protest pens, and the treatment of anti-Olympic banners as potential issues. “We’re still developing our practices for recording and storing evidence collected by Observers,” said Eby. “This isn’t just the launch of the torch, it’s the launch of a really exciting accountability program for our Association and supporters.”

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