



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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For immediate release

BCCLA congratulates VPD for changes to Downtown Eastside crackdown plan

Vancouver, B.C. – The BC Civil Liberties Association congratulated the Vancouver Police Department for amending their 2009 business plan to eliminate proposed targets of increasing the number of bylaw tickets issued by 20% and introducing unprecedented levels of arbitrary and unconstitutional “street checks” of the neighbourhood’s residents. The VPD confirmed at their March 18 Police Board meeting that their ticketing and street check practices had returned to “historical levels” and that language outlining the initiative had been removed from their business plan.

“The BCCLA was there at the beginning to raise the issue about this ineffective policing tactic and its impact on people’s ability to access basic healthcare and essential services,” says David Eby, acting Executive Director of the BCCLA. “We are glad that the VPD has listened to the concerns of the community and reversed their crackdown agenda.”

On February 10, 2009, the BCCLA along with five AIDS service organizations were the first community groups to raise concerns publicly about the VPD plan to crackdown on the homeless and marginalized populations in the Downtown Eastside in the lead up to the 2010 Olympics. The BCCLA also supported neighbourhood community initiatives around the business plan, many of which were organized by the Power of Women group from the DTES Women’s Centre.

“We’re very pleased that the VPD listened to community concerns on this,” said Richard Elliot of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. “It’s not often that consideration for marginalized people who are easy targets actually wins the day over simplistic impulses to ‘clean up the streets’, especially in a period of pre-Olympic hype, so the Vancouver Police Department deserves credit for giving this plan some sober second thought.”

Eby noted that the VPD has still not removed provisions vowing to eliminate street vending and to increase the number of police officers in the neighbourhood, and said the BCCLA would be watching closely over the next few months.

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