



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
April 8, 2009

Complaint, coverage leads to policy change and apology

The BC Civil Liberties Association thanked the Chief of the Vancouver Police Department today for moving to clarify police policy around seizing cameras from the public and for apologizing in writing to a Province newspaper photographer.

On Tuesday morning, the BCCLA filed a policy complaint with the Vancouver Police Board and the VPD, saying that a string of incidents of alleged police interference with cameras and media, in particular during incidents that involved police shootings, suggested policy clarity was required. By the end of the day, a reformed policy and an apology letter had been received by the Province newspaper.

“It was completely appropriate for Chief Jim Chu to apologize to Province photographer Jason Payne,” said David Eby, Executive Director of the BCCLA. “We congratulate the VPD in being able to recognize mistakes and moving quickly to correct policy. These are the hallmarks of a police department interested in accountability.”

Eby also thanked the Province newspaper staff on behalf of the BCCLA for having the courage to report on the incident, noting that their actions in bringing the case forward have helped improve working conditions for all journalists in Vancouver.

The new VPD policy is described in a “Bulletin” which recognizes that police do not have a blanket ability to take cameras from either members of the public or the media. According to the new policy, Police may only seize cameras in instances where there is an arrest, a warrant permitting seizure, or officers have a reasonable concern, grounded in evidence, that the person taking the pictures or video may not be locatable or will destroy the evidence.

“We call on the Vancouver Police Board to follow Chief Chu’s lead on this matter and enshrine this Bulletin as formal Vancouver Police Department policy,” said Eby. “This new policy, if executed, will address many of the concerns of the public arising from recent incidents.”

The BCCLA will be continuing with its policy complaint to ensure that the Vancouver Police include the bulletin as part of their formal policy manual on which all new recruits are trained.

[Letter to Wayne Moriarty >>](#)

[Standards for seizure of video equipment >>](#)

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