



## NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association  
October 9, 2009

For immediate release

### **BCCLA condemns unlucky B.C. Government Bill 13**

**Vancouver, B.C.** – The B.C. Civil Liberties Association today condemned the BC government's Bill 13 proposals to allow Richmond, Whistler and Vancouver to enter residences and other private property with only 24 hours notice to remove or cover up signs during the Olympic period.

The amendments to the *Municipalities Enabling and Validating Act (No. 3)* introduced in the legislature apply only to the three Olympic cities over February and March 2010. Another amendment changes the *Vancouver Charter* to permit fines for sign and bylaw violations of up to \$10,000 per day and imprisonment for up to 6 months. Previously, people had 14 days to comply with the bylaw, and fines were \$2,000 per day.

"It used to be that a person's home was his castle, but now the local governments want to storm the citadel of every castle to take down signs they regard as offensive to their Olympic plans," said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. "Telling people who exercise free speech that local authorities may barge in, rip down signs inside your property, fine you or throw you in jail will underscore the growing impression that our governments care more about their own camera appearances at Olympic events than about people's rights."

The provincial law is at first reading and has not yet passed. If the law passes, municipalities would need to enact their own bylaws to take advantage of the new powers granted.

"If Vancouver acts on this provision, people will be risking \$10,000 a day fines and 6 months in jail just to criticize the Olympics," said Holmes. "6 months in jail is usually reserved for criminals who have a record of several convictions for breaking and entering, but now it's government that wants to break in."

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Robert Holmes, President, BCCLA (604) 681-1310  
David Eby, Executive Director, BCCLA (778) 865-7997