



NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release
October 5, 2011**



FOIPA Act amendments mean less privacy, no improvements to ailing FOI process

Vancouver – The BC Civil Liberties Association and the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association are raising the alarm over amendments to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* introduced yesterday.

“The government has decided on a policy to massively increase the personal information collected, stored and shared with others. This law pushes us all further down that treacherous path. Yet, projects like this, that centralize huge amounts of data, have been discredited the world over. Such personal information banks violate privacy rights, cost billions and often end up a waste of money, said Micheal Vonn, Policy Director of the BCCLA.

“BC should throw out the plan and this bill. British Columbians’ privacy rights should not be eroded for the sake of bureaucrats’ ‘vision’ of government efficiency, a short-sighted vision that has all too often proven to be a failure.”

The Ministry of Education’s nearly \$100-million student data centralization system is being scrapped after a \$250,000 independent review in September concluded it did not perform satisfactorily. And calls have recently been issued for Canada to revisit centralized electronic health records in the light of scathing evaluations of systems elsewhere which revealed the model to be inefficient, ineffective, costly and wasteful.

Vonn: “The BC government is enthralled with the notion of ‘joined-up’ government. By that phrase, bureaucrats mean they get to share your information without permission. The worst example of “joined-up-government” is the United Kingdom, and since the last election it has been trying to figure out how to undo years of bureaucratization and mismanagement of data collected about citizens. One UK government committee said recently that their system was a ‘recipe for rip-off’. Instead of learning lessons from elsewhere, BC plans to repeat their costly mistakes.”

The two groups were also critical about the lack of amendments to address the dire state of Freedom of Information in British Columbia. BC recently scored last on a national FOI survey conducted by Newspapers Canada.

Vincent Gogolek, Executive Director of FIPA, stated, “While these are the only privacy laws in Canada that specifically enable systems-wide data-linkages of citizens’ information, the government’s enthusiasm for ‘sharing’ dries up when it’s the government’s information. All the current FOI law’s blatant problems are left to stand and the bill merely offers a general encouragement for government to post more information online”.

“Open government is more than just some datasets on a website,” added Gogolek. “We expected more from a Premier who based her leadership campaign on Open Government and transparency.”

[Link to National Freedom of Information Audit 2011](#)

[Link to CMAJ News on centralized electronic health records schemes](#)

CONTACTS: Micheal Vonn Policy Director, BCCLA: 604-630-9753
Vincent Gogolek, Executive Director, FIPA: 604-739-9788 cell 604-318-0031