



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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For immediate release

New law may create largest DNA database in Canada

Recent revelations that B.C.'s health authorities are secretly storing and testing children's DNA without parental consent, combined with provisions of Bill 11 that allow B.C.'s Minister of Health to gather information like these DNA records without notice or consent, have resulted in a call from the BCCLA for the government to retract the bill and the health authority to destroy the records. The new law and the records combined may create the largest DNA database in Canada.

More than 800,000 blood spot cards, containing DNA samples from almost every infant born in British Columbia and the Yukon in the last 11 years, are currently stored by the government at storage facility operated by Iron Mountain, a private contractor to the government. Government has allowed these cards to be accessed by researchers and potentially could allow access to them by law enforcement and other agencies, all without parental consent. Bill 11 allows the Health Minister to seize these records and share them across provincial government departments, as well as law enforcement agencies.

"While there may well be positive arguments for conducting medical and scientific research on a blind basis concerning DNA samples, nobody told the parents whose children have had samples taken and stored that this was the plan," said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. "Bill 11 makes this one of the largest government DNA databases in Canada. All this has been done without public knowledge. Serious questions exist as to the legality of taking private information and using it without consent."

Bill 11 is a grab bag of miscellaneous legislative provisions, including sections 165-167 that give the Minister of Health power to collect, gather, use and share personal information without any notice to or consent from affected individuals. "That violates privacy rights," noted Holmes. "The public deserves a full explanation from the government." Until Bill 11 is retracted and storage policies changed within the screening program, the BCCLA says that concerned parents can request that their children's records be returned to them using the form below.

[Read about Bill 11 here >>](#)

[See the correspondence here >>](#)

[Form to request your child's blood spot card >>](#)

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