



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association

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RCMP must get permission before training dogs in backyards

The BCCLA says that RCMP officers must get permission before training dogs or officers in people's private backyards. The Association has filed a complaint after reports of misstatements of the law by RCMP officers in Nanaimo concerning their rights to enter public property without a warrant for training purposes.

The alleged misstatements follow an incident in Lantzville, where Nanaimo RCMP on a training exercise were training a police dog by entering private backyards, without permission from or even notice to the property owners concerned. Subsequent reports include an allegation of other RCMP training exercises in the same area involving officers firing "blanks" in residential areas without notice to homeowners or a nearby school.

"An editorial in Lantzville's paper suggested that this was just an 'honest mistake,'" said Robert Holmes, Q.C., President of the BCCLA. "But repeated comments in the media by Nanaimo RCMP indicate that some officers there may hold the view that they are within their rights to enter private property without consent. That is not so. These comments show inadequate legal advice or training."

Holmes says that failing to give advance notice that dogs are going to be in the area and potentially entering private property puts members of the public, children and pets at risk. In 2009, RCMP officers in Chilliwack shot a family pet after it bit a police dog during a training exercise. The police dog had gone under the family's backyard fence and the family had not been warned there would be training in the area. A study in the UK showed UK police dogs bit 196 police staff and 155 members of the public who were not suspects between 2008 and 2011. Similar data concerning the RCMP and other police in Canada is not publicly available.

"Police dogs perform useful functions. It is obvious that they need to be trained in different environments," noted Holmes. "While the majority of the public may well be supportive if the RCMP asked for their permission in advance for such excursions, the force needs to have an unambiguous policy about dog training and private property – don't enter unless you've got informed consent in advance from the owner and you've given ample notice. Period."

[Click here to read the BCCLA's letter of complaint to the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP >>](#)

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