



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **CIVIL LIBERTIES ORGANIZATION REACTS TO PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU EXAMINING ‘EMERGENCY MEASURES’**

VANCOUVER/ March 17, 2020 – As part of the federal government’s response to COVID-19, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated today that the federal government is examining the *Emergencies Act* “to see if it is necessary or if there are other ways that will enable us to take the actions needed to protect people.”

According to Harsha Walia, Executive Director of the BC Civil Liberties Association “We fully support actions taken by all levels of government that prioritize public health, including measures that resource our public infrastructure for the benefit of all and protect those, such as seniors, precarious workers, Indigenous communities, and homeless people, who are most vulnerable during this pandemic. However, we strongly urge the federal government to use the utmost restraint in considering the *Emergencies Act*, which grants exceptional powers including the regulation of mobility and forced removal of personal property that could violate the civil liberties of individuals and classes of people.”

The BC Civil Liberties Association is Canada’s oldest civil liberties and human rights organization, founded in 1962. During the October Crisis of 1970, the BCCLA expressed strong concerns about civil liberties violations and extraordinary federal powers with the use of *War Measures Act*, which preceded the current federal *Emergencies Act*. The *War Measures Act* was a travesty for civil liberties and human rights during World War I, World War II, and the October Crisis of 1970.

“There are adequate measures under other federal and provincial legislation to appropriately and urgently respond to COVID-19 without creating unintended consequences for civil liberties and human rights. We also remind the federal government that the *Emergencies Act* remains subject to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and fundamental rights must not be limited under any circumstances,” further states Walia.

### **Media inquiries:**

Harsha Walia, Executive Director, BCCLA: 778-885-0040