

## **2008 MEDIA STORIES UTILIZING RECORDS OBTAINED UNDER BRITISH COLUMBIA’S FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY ACT (1993)**

Here are summaries of B.C. news stories on issues as diverse as health, safety, government financial waste, public security, and environmental risks. They all share two common features: all reveal issues vital to the public interest (*i.e.*, not merely topics the public “might find interesting”), and all were made possible through FOI requests.

These articles merit a second look, for when they appear in a daily newspaper they might be forgotten within days, but many should not be, because we could be living continuously with the unresolved problems that they have raised. As well, some such articles have prompted regulatory improvements. Not every FOI story necessarily reveals a scandal, but can still be valuable in educating the public on the scope of a little-known issue, and on how government operates.

The stories could suggest topics to journalism students for their own FOI requests to make. As well, for FOI applicants who are appealing against refusals of disclosures, some stories could serve as precedents by showing the types of records that government has released before.

The examples noted here can serve as an antidote against despondency or cynicism regarding the flawed BC FOI system, for they show how journalists can sometimes overcome the barriers of bureaucratic and political resistance to produce valuable results. While these are often impressive enough, imagine how much more could yet be achieved with an improved BC FOI law, and the potential loss of such stories if the FOI system erodes still further. If the question is posed, “Why should we care if we have better FOI laws and practices?” - the answer is suggested in the texts below.

The articles were gathered and summarized by Stanley Tromp, Freedom of Information caucus coordinator of the Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ), who can be reached at [stanleytromp@gmail.com](mailto:stanleytromp@gmail.com) The project was made possible by the generous support of the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association, FIPA. ([www.fipa.bc.ca](http://www.fipa.bc.ca) )

Most of these stories are based on FOI requests made by journalists, although some may be reporting on FOI requests made by other requestors. The summaries reflect the language and perspective of the original articles, not the editor’s views. (Such stories from 1993 to 1998 can be read at <http://www.direct.ca/bcjc/archives.htm> )

<p>British Columbia Coroners Service statistics obtained through FOI note that at least 54 people have died on SkyTrain tracks and platforms since 1985. Ten deaths were accidental, and the rest were suicides. The SkyTrain president said there is no plan to retrofit any Expo Line or Millennium Line platforms with barriers to stop people from falling or jumping on tracks. Past Olympic cities like Beijing and Torino have such barriers on their new rapid transit lines, as do Hong Kong, Las Vegas, London, Paris and Singapore.</p>	<p>Nov. 18/08</p>	<p><i>SkyTrain's Mounting Death Toll. Experts urge platform barriers already saving lives in other cities</i></p> <p>By Bob Mackin</p> <p>TheTyee.ca</p>	<p>British Columbia Coroners Service</p>	<p>Health and Safety</p>
<p>Dozens of B.C. nurses guilty of everything from stealing narcotics to abusing patients have been allowed to quietly leave the profession over the past few years without the public ever learning of their misconduct, according to internal discipline records. Between January 2006 and November 2007, 45 nurses in B.C. agreed to a suspension of their registration with the College of Registered Nurses after the college found serious cases of misconduct or incompetence. Six of them, however, have now re-registered to work.</p>	<p>Sept. 18/08</p>	<p><i>B.C. nurses accused of drug theft, abuse allowed to quit quietly</i></p> <p>By Chad Skelton</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>B.C. College of Registered Nurses</p>	<p>Health and Safety</p>

<p>Four youths fell off the Screaming Eagle chairlift at Grouse Mountain in one month. It took Cypress Mountain staff almost three hours to unload the last of 33 skiers stranded on a lift. For scores of skiers and snowboarders every winter in B.C., the ride up the mountain is the most dangerous part of their day. The B.C. Safety Authority, an independent agency of the provincial government, calls such events "reportable incidents" and recorded 228 of them over the past two seasons at downhill ski hills around B.C.</p>	<p>Feb. 9/08</p>	<p><i>Minimizing The Risks; While B.C.'s ski lifts are safe, riders without instruction are in danger of injury, officials say</i></p> <p>By Larry Pynn</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>B.C. Safety Authority</p>	<p>Health and Safety</p>
<p>B.C. Safety Authority records show that Skyline Eco-Adventures at Whistler's Cougar Mountain had three safety-related incidents in August 2007. The authority subsequently issued the company with a long list of corrective actions requiring compliance in one to 60 days, including the hiring of a professional engineer to inspect cables, and ensuring proper training of guides. The authority also emphasized the company's obligation to report such accidents. Unfortunately, that didn't stop more accidents at Skyline Eco-Adventures.</p>	<p>May 13/08</p>	<p><i>Zip-line industry has another side to it</i></p> <p>By Larry Pynn</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>B.C. Safety Authority</p>	<p>Health and Safety</p>

<p>The B.C. Nurses Union accused the provincial government of accelerating for-profit health care by deliberately ignoring illegal extra billing for medical services. The union obtained internal memos that showed the government asked offending doctors and clinics to refund patients charged illegal fees, but then took no action if they refused to pay. The union said that records also show the government wrote to patients who complained and suggested they seek a refund of the illegal fees themselves.</p>	<p>Nov. 14/08</p>	<p><i>B.C. accelerating for-profit medicine: union</i></p> <p>Prince George Citizen (Canadian Press)</p>	<p>B.C. Health Ministry</p>	<p>Health and Safety</p>
<p>The Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal rejected an appeal by Babine Forest Products of its \$32,450 fine levied by WorkSafe B.C. following the death of a veteran log trucker in 2003. A WorkSafe B.C. investigation report concluded in March 2004 that one of the causes of the crash was the unsafe practices of hauling logs in both directions on an extremely narrow road that wasn't designed to accommodate two loaded logging trucks travelling in opposite directions.</p>	<p>Sept. 9/08</p>	<p><i>Tribunal rejects forest firm's appeal</i></p> <p>By Gordon Hoekstra</p> <p>Prince George Citizen</p>	<p>WorkSafe B.C.</p>	<p>Health and Safety</p>

<p>Richard Balfour, director for both the Metro Vancouver Planning Coalition and the New City Institute, used FOI to obtain a B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands report titled, <i>BC's Food Self Reliance: Can BC farmers feed our growing population?</i>. The report's conclusion was that B.C. currently produces only 48 per cent of the food consumed within the province.</p>	<p>Dec. 1/08</p>	<p><i>Homeland (Food) Security</i></p> <p>By Jon Steinman</p> <p>TheTye.ca</p>	<p>B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands</p>	<p>The Economy</p>
<p>When the Forest Minister announced in 2007 the controversial deal to allow Western Forest Products Inc. to remove private land from management under the Tree Farm Licence system, he promised "an agreement to work with the Ministry of Environment on protecting ungulate winter ranges." Records show how the Environment Ministry's negotiation with WFP actually ended in the government excusing the company from protecting elk and deer on its land, despite the promises. "It rapidly became apparent that . . . most, if not all, of the areas are important to the existing population of elk and deer and that elimination of the habitat will have a negative effect on those populations," wrote one official.</p>	<p>Apr. 10/08</p>	<p><i>How Island Elk Range Was Stripped of Protection</i></p> <p>By Andrew MacLeod</p> <p>TheTye.ca</p>	<p>B.C. Environment Ministry</p>	<p>Environment</p>

<p>Ecojustice and the Environmental Law Centre called on B.C.'s auditor general to investigate whether the province failed to protect endangered species such as the marmot by taking advantage of loopholes in federal legislation. Under the federal government's 2003 Species at Risk Act, provinces have an obligation to protect habitats they designate as "critical." According to the complaint, based on documents obtained through FOI, B.C.'s Environment Ministry has disregarded information from scientists working on species recovery projects.</p>	<p>Nov. 27/08</p>	<p><i>BC exploits loophole, dodges duty to protect species: green groups</i></p> <p>By Geoff Dembicki</p> <p>TheTyee.ca</p>	<p>B.C. Environment Ministry</p>	<p>Environment</p>
<p>The number of public complaints against transit police officers rose sharply since the B.C. government granted them permission to carry firearms. All alleged "abuse of authority," according to internal Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service records. In 2005, during the period before transit police carried guns, only four complaints were filed, but during the next three years, there was an average of 1.5 complaints per month. "Of these 52 complaints, 6 were substantiated, 20 unsubstantiated, 6 summarily dismissed, 6 informally resolved, 2 withdrawn and the rest are still open files," wrote the deputy chief.</p>	<p>Dec. 23/08</p>	<p><i>Transit cops with guns get complaints</i></p> <p>By Charlie Smith</p> <p>The Georgia Straight</p>	<p>Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service</p>	<p>Crime and Policing</p>

<p>Vancouver-area transit police will be included in a public inquiry into the use of Tasers by B.C. police officers, after reports the stun guns were used on at least four non-violent transit users in 2007, primarily those who had failed to pay their fares. The expanded mandate followed a Vancouver Sun column citing information obtained by Vancouver writer Gordon Keast under FOI that showed SkyTrain police have used the stun gun on 10 occasions since July 2007. It is the only armed transit police force in Canada.</p>	<p>Apr. 16/08</p>	<p><i>SkyTrain transit cops tasered fare-dodgers, documents show</i></p> <p>By David Hogben</p> <p>Times-Colonist, Victoria</p>	<p>Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service</p>	<p>Crime and Policing</p>
<p>CBC News learned the B.C. Lottery Corp. under-reported suspected money laundering at the province's casinos for years. Documents show casino workers routinely observe dozens of suspicious financial transactions each year, but only a fraction are reported to the federal agency that tracks money laundering. Players can feed thousands of dollars in \$20 bills into slot machines and cash out after playing only once or twice, walking away with a casino cheque for the remaining amount. By law, BCLC must file reports of all incidents of suspected money laundering with the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, or FINTRAC, the federal agency that tracks the crime. The federal agency has asked the province to investigate.</p>	<p>May 21/08</p>	<p><i>Suspected money laundering at B.C. casinos under-reported, CBC probe reveals</i></p> <p>By Curt Petrovich</p> <p>CBC News</p>	<p>B.C. Lottery Corp.</p>	<p>Crime and Policing</p>

<p>Records show a dramatic drop in marijuana grow operations among cities participating in a safety initiative designed to shut down indoor pot plantations. But the initiatives are also having an effect on municipalities that aren't participating, the figures show. Electrical usage summaries from B.C. Hydro of unusually high electrical consumers show nearly a 20 per cent drop in high consumption rates among the six cities involved in the Electrical Fire Safety Initiative, a program started by Surrey's fire chief in 2005 to shut down marijuana grow operations.</p>	<p>June 6/08</p>	<p><i>Hydro records show drop in grow ops</i></p> <p>By Kevin Diakiw</p> <p>The Leader, Surrey</p>	<p>BC Hydro</p>	<p>Crime and Policing</p>
<p>Rising energy costs are hitting a quarter-million low-income families three times as hard as other British Columbians, according to a report done for the B.C. government. It calculates that about 18 per cent of B.C. residents are living in "energy poverty," forcing them to spend about 17 per cent of total after-tax income on heat, light and fuel. Those better-off spend about five per cent on energy. The report was obtained by the B.C. Old Age Pensioners' Organization via FOI, and has been posted on the website of the B.C. Utilities Commission as part of a hearing on proposed BC Hydro rate increases.</p>	<p>June 25/08</p>	<p><i>Energy hikes hit poor the hardest; 'Energy poverty' means people can't afford to upgrade their homes</i></p> <p>By Scott Simpson</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>B.C. Utilities Commission</p>	<p>Consumer Rights</p>

<p>CTV News obtain digital copies of every parking ticket issued in Vancouver over a two-week period in the spring. With some 400,000 parking tickets issued per year, CTV asked software company ESRI Canada to help. The company analyzed the data and built an online map, which shows readers where the parking ticket officers go and where they tend to avoid. See <a href="http://www.ctvbc.ctv.ca/knowparking/">http://www.ctvbc.ctv.ca/knowparking/</a></p>	<p>Sep. 29/08</p>	<p><i>Parking investigation reveals ticket secrets</i></p> <p>CTV BC</p>	<p>Vancouver City hall</p>	<p>Consumer Rights</p>
<p>In one case, the B.C. College of Teachers cancelled for a year the teaching licence of a woman who was working in a northern B.C. school when she and her husband intimidated and temporarily confined a 15-year-old student. Records show the girl told a college hearing she was walking outside when the couple approached her in their truck, jumped out and began swearing at her. They accused her of stealing from their truck and ordered her into a nearby house, where she was held temporarily against her will while the man threatened her.</p>	<p>Jan.14/08</p>	<p><i>Man barred from teaching for 50 years</i></p> <p>By Janet Steffenhagen</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>B.C. College of Teachers</p>	<p>Youth, children, seniors, disabled</p>

<p>The Campbell administration left vulnerable children in homes it judged unsafe, according to B.C.'s independent child protection watchdog, records show. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond said she launched an unprecedented audit that will investigate this. At issue: the government's child in home of a relative program, which would service an estimated 4,767 children in 2008. She cited four cases where homes have been denied assistance because there was evidence of risk, but the government hadn't taken action to remove the children from those homes.</p>	<p>Sept. 16/08</p>	<p><i>Children left in homes judged unsafe</i></p> <p>By Sean Holman</p> <p>Public Eye Online</p>	<p>B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development</p>	<p>Youth, children, seniors, disabled</p>
<p>In 2007 the province's child protection watchdog Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond concluded the ministry of children and family development had abandoned the Hughes Review recommendations. Letters from the deputy minister Lesley du Toit disputed this conclusion, although she conceded those recommendations weren't being used as "blueprint." Also, in March 2008, the deputy informed Turpel-Lafond she has "made every attempt to address" her "perception" that the ministry was "demonstrating poor cooperation with your office."</p>	<p>Sept.17/08</p>	<p><i>Forget him not?</i></p> <p>By Sean Holman</p> <p>Public Eye Online</p>	<p>B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development</p>	<p>Youth, children, seniors, disabled</p>

<p>An elderly woman died in 2006 at a Retirement Concepts care home while eating food of the wrong consistency, CTV reported. Despite being on a medically prescribed minced-food diet because of a risk of choking, the unidentified woman was fed waxed beans, according to a report by the Fraser Health Authority. Retirement Concepts came under fierce criticism for conditions at their care homes across B.C. Victoria's Beacon Hill Villa, which the firm had managed, is under provincial control after allegations of inadequate care.</p>	<p>Mar. 12/08</p>	<p><i>New allegations dog care-home company</i></p> <p>Times-Colonist, Victoria</p>	<p>Fraser Health Authority</p>	<p>Youth, children, seniors, disabled</p>
<p>Using FOI, the Vancouver Sun made detailed inspection data for all licensed care facilities in the Lower Mainland available online for the first time at <a href="http://www.vancouversun.com/care/">www.vancouversun.com/care/</a> The Sun added: "That raises an obvious question: Why isn't this stuff public already? Restaurant inspections have been online for six years now. And Fraser Health recently put inspection summaries online for swimming pools, hairdressers and tattoo parlours. Yet when it comes to the places that take care of the most vulnerable people in our society - children, the elderly and the disabled - information is scarce."</p>	<p>June 21/08</p>	<p><i>Why aren't inspection records public?; Information scarce for facilities caring for most vulnerable members of society</i></p> <p>By Chad Skelton</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>B.C. Health authorities</p>	<p>Youth, children, seniors, disabled</p>

<p>The B.C. ombudsman launched a broad investigation into seniors' care in B.C. after receiving an influx of complaints after a Vancouver Sun series ran. The stories by Chad Skelton detailed incidents that ranged from physical, emotional and sexual abuses to cases of medical neglect, theft from nursing home residents. It found that nearly one in nine long-term care facilities in the Lower Mainland could be rated by the government as "high risk," based partially on the facility's history of serious incidents. The BC Care Providers Association strongly complained that media reports from the records were "skewed."</p>	<p>Aug. 22/08</p>	<p><i>Ombudsman launches probe of B.C. seniors' care complaints</i></p> <p>By Lindsay Kines and Mary Frances Hill</p> <p>Canwest News Service</p>	<p>B.C. Health authorities</p>	<p>Youth, children, seniors, disabled</p>
<p>The B.C. government has given thousands of dollars in grants to B.C.'s main parent organization in recent years and asked little in return apart from a thank-you, according to documents. Cheques delivered to the B.C. Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) were for parent leadership courses, promotion of student achievement, teacher training, conferences, communications and school playground equipment for member PACs. "Even as a former [BCCPAC] board member, I was in the dark," one official told the Sun.</p>	<p>Mar. 12/08</p>	<p><i>Victoria provides funding, asks little in return from parents</i></p> <p>By Janet Steffenhagen</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>B.C. Ministry of Education</p>	<p>Education</p>

<p>The Fraser Institute admits its controversial report cards are not the definitive word on secondary school performance. Families choosing a school for their children should also pay it a visit and interview teachers, principals and other parents, the conservative think-tank said, and they should also consider non-academic programs offered by schools. The Institute has been publishing its B.C. school reports since 1998, obtaining the data from the B.C. education ministry through FOI. Teachers' unions want government FSA testing that produces much of the data to be stopped.</p>	<p>May 10/08</p>	<p><i>School report cards not definitive, think-tank says</i></p> <p>By Janet Steffenhagen</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>B.C. Education Ministry</p>	<p>Education</p>
<p>B.C. NDP leader Carole James charged that the carbon tax imposed by the provincial government will cost the B.C. Ambulance Service more than \$1 million over the next three years, and cause funding cuts. Using FOI records, the NDP said the tax means the ambulance service's air and ground vehicles will pay \$186,462 more for fuel in 2007-08, and an additional \$352,879 in 2009-10. The Health Minister conceded the carbon tax added to the fuel cost but said the NDP is being "misleading," because the Ambulance Service has undertaken mitigation measures to promote fuel conservation.</p>	<p>Oct. 2/08</p>	<p><i>Carbon tax will pain ambulance service: James</i></p> <p>By Frank Luba</p> <p>The Province, Vancouver</p>	<p>B.C. Health Ministry</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>

<p>The B.C. government's multi-billion dollar Gateway transportation plan includes three main components: twinning the Port Mann Bridge, building the North Fraser Perimeter Road Project, and building the new South Fraser Perimeter Road Project. Yet at the Wilderness Committee's office in Gastown, campaigner Ben West obtained documents that reveal B.C. government officials failed to take into account rapidly rising fuel costs when they were establishing the feasibility of Gateway. The government's analysis was based on a forecast of gas at 80 cents a litre while analysts have predicted prices could hit three times that amount.</p>	<p>Sept. 26/08</p>	<p><i>Roads to nowhere; Opposition to the provincial government's Gateway Project is heating up</i></p> <p>By Michael McCarthy</p> <p>Vancouver Courier</p>	<p>B.C. Transportation Ministry</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>
<p>Taxpayers paid more than \$600,000 in six severance deals for high-ranking Victoria police employees in the past six years, including the former head of information technology, three inspectors, the deputy chief, and the chief's executive assistant. All were reported to have had personal or professional differences with former police chief Paul Battershill, and the force considers their departures to be dismissals without cause. They all signed non-disclosure agreements that prevent them from commenting on the deals.</p>	<p>Sept. 21/08</p>	<p><i>Conflict complaint sparked probe; Attorney Marli Rusen had affair with Battershill while advising him on labour relations</i></p> <p>By Rob Shaw</p> <p>Times-Colonist, Victoria</p>	<p>Victoria Police Department</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>

<p>A total of 759 B.C. public servants make more than \$200,000 a year. To create a B.C. public-sector salary database, The Vancouver Sun filed FOI requests to more than 90 government agencies, asking for the names, titles and remuneration for all staff earning more than \$75,000. However, instead of asking for the information on paper, as most agencies usually provide it, The Sun asked for the data in electronic format, such as an Excel spreadsheet. This allowed The Sun to build a single, searchable database of more than 30,000 salaries. The vast majority of agencies complied with The Sun's request, but a few refused, insisting on paper. See <a href="http://www.vancouversun.com/pay">www.vancouversun.com/pay</a></p>	<p>Dec. 6/08</p>	<p><i>Some agencies refused to provide salary data, except on paper</i></p> <p>By Chad Skelton</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>Provincial government</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>
<p>A \$2.5-million provincial program to subsidize student ferry fares should either be scrapped or significantly improved, says an internal government audit. The auditors found the Ministry of Transportation's program for student ferry discounts has swelled well beyond its prescribed budget, and does not have the proper checks and balances to remain accountable. "It is not clear to us why the ministry is subsidizing B.C. students' travel on BC Ferries, especially since the program cost exceeds the amount funded by Treasury Board," said the audit.</p>	<p>Nov. 17/08</p>	<p><i>Scrap ferry subsidy program, report recommends</i></p> <p>By Jonathan Fowle</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>B.C. Finance Ministry</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>

<p>The B.C. Nurses Union is accusing the provincial government of accelerating for-profit health care by deliberately ignoring illegal extra billing for medical services. The union obtained internal memos that show the government asked offending doctors and clinics to refund patients charged illegal fees, but then took no action if they refused to pay. It also said the documents also show the government wrote to patients who complained and suggested they seek a refund of the illegal fees themselves.</p>	<p>Nov. 14/08</p>	<p><i>B.C. accelerating for-profit medicine: union</i></p> <p>Prince George Citizen (Canadian Press)</p>	<p>B.C. Health Ministry</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>
<p>A business run by three B.C. government workers received more than \$300,000 in provincial contracts without having to compete against other firms, an internal audit shows. Protective Safety Systems B.C., operated by three employees in the Attorney-General's Ministry, got 11 untendered contracts to train conservation officers in the use of force from January 2000 to May 2006. The environment ministry, which awarded the contracts, broke government rules that require major projects to be advertised and open to public bidding, the audit said.</p>	<p>Nov. 3/08</p>	<p><i>Audit shows ministry broke rules in awarding contract; Environment Ministry contracts didn't go to tender</i></p> <p>By Lindsay Kines</p> <p>The Vancouver Sun</p>	<p>B.C. Finance Ministry</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>

<p>The Ellice Street playlot was the only site considered for a new emergency shelter in a study that looked at how five pieces of public land in Victoria could be used to reduce homelessness. The study, delivered to the city and B.C. Housing by local firm CitySpaces Consulting, was commissioned by the province to evaluate potential costs to develop the properties. The province's decision to fund the Ellice Street shelter project has met with sustained protest from the Burnside-Gorge Community Association. Its president criticized the study's limited scope: "Where is the choice here? There is only one site that was identified."</p>	<p>July 9/08</p>	<p><i>Ellice Street only site considered for shelter</i></p> <p>By Keith Vass</p> <p>Victoria News</p>	<p>Victoria city hall</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>
<p>B.C.'s growing labour shortage poses a "significant" risk to the 2010 Olympic Games, said a finance ministry audit, noting that the Vancouver Organizing Committee faced difficulties in recruiting or retaining 40 highly qualified workers, a large proportion of its total staff of 370. The organizing committee is spending \$33-million on raises and bonuses through to the end of the Games in a bid to retain staff - inducements that rise with salary, seniority and length of service. The audit also noted the lack of a "comprehensive strategy" to deal with budget deficits that might arise.</p>	<p>Jan. 17/08</p>	<p><i>VANOC bosses tackle ski-jump fight, labour woes</i></p> <p>By Patrick Brethour and Stanley Tromp</p> <p>Globe and Mail (B.C. edition)</p>	<p>B.C. Finance Ministry</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>

<p>The Progressive Group's Mark Jiles – Premier Campbell's former constituency campaign manager - arranged a December 17, 2007 meeting for New Car Dealers Association of B.C. representatives with a government official. At the time he was not registered to lobby on behalf of the association. According to an e-mail Jiles sent, the association's president and director wanted to meet with then finance minister Carole Taylor. Under the Lobbyists Registration Act, consultant lobbyists are required to sign-up if they, for pay, communicate with a public office holder in an attempt to influence government. The Progressive Group insisted it had followed the Act.</p>	<p>Oct. 23/08</p>	<p><i>Jiles arranged meeting before registering to lobby</i></p> <p>By Andrew MacLeod</p> <p>TheTyee.ca</p>	<p>B.C. Finance Ministry</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>
<p>In rolling out the Civil City project in 2006, Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan vowed to cut in half homelessness, street drug use and aggressive panhandling by 2010. Statistics show all three have risen since. By mid-December 2007, the Project had spent \$156,776, according to accounting provided by the City of Vancouver. Most of that was spent on contract and consulting services, including fees paid to consultant Geoff Plant's blue-chip law firm, Heenan Blaikie. More than half of the Project's allotted budget was spent in its first year, but so far there's no statistical progress to show for the money invested.</p>	<p>Jan. 24/08</p>	<p><i>Vancouver's citizen security project way off its goals</i></p> <p>By Monte Paulsen</p> <p>TheTyee.ca</p>		<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>

<p>FOI requests revealed large spending by Partnership BC's CEO Larry Blain. In fiscal year 2005-2006, at one meal, for example, 17 guests at Vancouver's Al Porto Ristorante imbibed five bottles of Wild Goose Pinot Gris, three of Columbia Crest Merlot, two of Penfolds Chardonnay, and three of the d'Arenberg's The Stump Jump. Blain later paid back the alcohol expenses to government. More such stories ran in Victoria's Monday Magazine and the Georgia Straight. After the revelations, a PBC official said an audit into all spending at the agency going back to its 2002 inception was underway. Blain earned \$519,448 salary and bonuses that year, claiming \$45,325 in expenses.</p>	<p>Apr. 22/08</p>	<p><i>'How Many Bottles of Wine to Build a Hospital?' Libs' audit lets high-flying P3 deal makers off hook: NDP.</i></p> <p>By Andrew MacLeod</p> <p>TheTyee.ca</p>	<p>Partnership BC</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>
<p>A major Gastown developer wanted the controversial seven-storey condominium-and-retail complex planned for 58 West Hastings Street to be much taller. In a May 2008 e-mail, Jon Stovell, the general manager of Reliance Holdings, wrote to city planner Alison Higginson arguing that the 70-foot-tall project should include a 300-foot-tall tower that could contain 30 storeys. Stovell also sits on the City of Vancouver development permit board's advisory panel.</p>	<p>Nov. 19/08</p>	<p><i>Developer pushed for 300-foot-tall 58 West Hastings tower</i></p> <p>By Pieta Woolley</p> <p>The Georgia Straight</p>	<p>Vancouver city hall</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>

<p>When the B.C. government stated in 2001 that it intended to force people off welfare after a certain amount of time, it announced changes unprecedented in Canada. Yet before the time limits could take effect in B.C., in early 2004, the government announced regulatory amendments that ended the experiment. So who or what was responsible for the reversal? The two authors' search for answers took them through more than 1,000 pages of internal government documents obtained via FOI as well as other sources, and resulted in a report titled <a href="#"><i>The Rise and Fall of Welfare Time Limits in British Columbia</i></a>, published by the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group.</p>	<p>July 31/08</p>	<p><i>Why Welfare Time Limits Never Flew</i></p> <p>By Bruce Wallace and Tim Richards</p> <p>TheTyee.ca</p>	<p>Provincial government</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>
<p>Children and family development employees took \$7.3 million of sick leave in fiscal 2007/08, costing the government more money than any other B.C. ministry. That money equals 47,313 sick days or an average of 12.39 days per employee, more than the 8.55 day average across government. A spokesperson explained, "MCFD has the most employees in government, at 4,800 employees. Our staff, particularly those who work in the field and on the front-lines, face significant pressures due to the nature of the work." The numbers rose since the Liberals took power in 2001.</p>	<p>Aug. 6/08</p>	<p><i>'That's sick!'</i></p> <p>By Sean Holman</p> <p>Public Eye Online</p>	<p>B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>

<p>During his two-week trade mission to Europe, Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources Minister Richard Neufeld met with the Norwegian "industry representatives in renewable energy, carbon capture and storage and offshore resources" in Stavanger. A confidential agenda shows he was also at a reception attended by "military oil companies" and hosted by the Canadian embassy. Stavanger is the fourth largest city in Norway and home to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Joint Warfare Centre.</p>	<p>Apr.22/08</p>	<p><i>Greasing the gears of war?</i> By Sean Holman The Public Eye Online</p>	<p>Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources Ministry</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>
<p>More than 900 people on the Vancouver Police Department's payroll earned more than \$75,000 dollars in 2007, according to FOI records. Citing security reasons, only the names of members on the executive committee, Chief Jim Chu, and former Chief Jamie Graham, have been released. Graham's salary tops the list at \$248,408, with additional expenses of more than \$13,000. The VPD has a policy of making all FOI requests public.</p>	<p>Sept. 12/08</p>	<p><i>Salaries of Vancouver's top cops revealed</i> By Darcy Wintonyk, CTV BC</p>	<p>Vancouver Police Department</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>

<p>The Campbell administration spent \$587,791.06 on parties to celebrate civil service achievements, records noted. But the government said such celebrations are needed to help retain and recruit employees in a tight labour market. It paid out at least \$77,564 catering to the dining desires of the 1,813 bureaucrats and guests who were scheduled to attend the premier's fourth annual innovation and excellence awards. The biggest ticket item at \$149,726 was a video of interviews with award nominees, as well as five "fun, high energy" ceremony opening videos "intended to inspire government employees and guests about the range, quality and importance of work in the public service."</p>	<p>July 30/08</p>	<p><i>The right to party?</i> By Sean Holman Public Eye Online</p>	<p>Premier's Office</p>	<p>Government Spending, Efficiency, and Accountability</p>
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