



Public Health Association of British Columbia
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May 26, 2008

By Email: wally.oppal.mla@leg.bc.ca

The Honourable Wally Oppal, Q.C.
Attorney-General and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism
Room 234
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

To: Honourable Wally Oppal, Q.C.

Re: **Bill 42**

I am writing on behalf of the Public Health Association of British Columbia (PHABC) to submit our concern regarding changes to section 41 of the *Elections Act* as outlined in Bill 42 that establishes new voter identification requirements. As an organization representing public health practitioners, the Association's mandate is to advocate for the health of our communities through the development and implementation of healthy public policy. We are concerned that this legislation will further disenfranchise many individuals who are facing societal barriers. People who may have difficulty presenting proper identification are often the most disadvantaged in our society and include homeless individuals, seniors and people with disabilities. At a time when low voter turnout is a growing concern, Bill 42 may disenfranchise those who wish to vote by restricting viable options for people to identify themselves when voting.

Equally important are the potential health impacts of such a decision. Numerous studies show a correlation between community participation and health outcomes. Of course, there are many avenues to community participation but voting is a basic, viable and empowering opportunity for those who are excluded from other forms of public participation. The World Health Organization notes that "Empowerment is a viable public health strategy". Positive community outcomes from civic participation include a sense of community, neighborhood cohesion, transparency in decision-making and increased accountability. We would ask you to reconsider this decision and explore and implement new ways that make it easier for vulnerable populations to participate in the electoral process.

Sincerely,

Ted Bruce
President