

# **85 fine news stories published with records obtained under the B.C. *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act***

Jan. 1, 2021 – Sept. 15, 2024

Collected and summarized by Stanley L. Tromp

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the B.C. Civil Liberties Association*

[1]

***Canadian Taxpayers Federation presents 23rd annual Teddy Awards for government waste***

**By Staff, *Vernon Matters*, March 16, 2021**

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation held its 23rd annual Teddy Waste Awards ceremony in a special virtual presentation, celebrating the best of the worst in government waste uncovered in the past year. These include an award for TransLink for announcing that agency executives would all be taking a 10 per cent pay cut last spring. FOI work by the CTF revealed that TransLink executives used federal and provincial emergency COVID money to quietly reverse the very pay cuts. Also, Vancouver City Council spent \$316,000 on designer office furniture at the same time Mayor Kennedy Stewart publicly complained that the city was facing a COVID-related cash crunch.

[2]

***The 2021 B.C. heat dome timeline: delays led to deaths***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, June 23, 2022**

“Several of the global models are predicting an extraordinarily unusual heatwave this weekend in the Pacific Northwest,” blogged University of Washington atmospheric sciences professor Cliff Mass on June 21, 2021. “A heatwave so extreme that many locations might experience their warmest temperature on record.” What happened in B.C. was the biggest natural disaster in Canadian history. Officials were late to warn the public. Dispatchers, paramedics and emergency room doctors and nurses struggled with the deluge of patients. Coroners had hundreds of heat-related deaths to investigate. What went wrong? What follows is a timeline constructed via FOI-obtained email from Health Emergency Management B.C. (HEMBC) executive director John Lavery and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry.

[3]

***Staff shortage, poor infection control at heart of BC's deadliest COVID-19 outbreak***

**By Justine Hunter and Xiao Xu, *Globe and Mail*, March 31, 2021**

There was a lack of understanding about infection control measures during a COVID-19 outbreak that killed 41 seniors at Vancouver's Little Mountain Place long term care home, and the problems were compounded by a staff shortage as dozens of workers fell ill from the virus, an internal report has found. The Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) inspection report, obtained by The Globe through FOI, was produced in response to complaints from multiple families about the facility's management of the outbreak. The family of one victim said the report makes clear that the deaths didn't have to happen. A staff member of Little Mountain Place tested positive for COVID-19 on Nov. 20, but families of the residents were initially told the exposure posed a minimal risk to their loved ones. Then an outbreak was declared on Nov. 22. Almost all the residents - 99 out of 112 - contracted the virus, along with 71 members of the staff.

[4]

***Health workers are facing record levels of violence***

**By Moira Wyton and Zak Vescera, *The Tyee*, Feb. 1, 2023**

Health-care workers are facing a rising tide of violence in B.C.'s two largest health authorities. The Fraser Health authority issued a record 2,370 "Code Whites" across 14 facilities in the 2021–22 fiscal year, more than triple the number of calls from 2014–15. The Code White call is used to alert staff to aggressive people in health-care settings without alarming patients. That data - which The Tyee obtained through FOI - shows that 1,660 of the Code Whites declared in the last year were "physical," indicating an assault or the threat of one. There were only 514 such Code Whites issued in 2014–15. Unions say the figures reflect an epidemic of violence against their members, who increasingly endure scratches, punches and kicks while doing their jobs.

[5]

***Fire safety issues plague B.C. non-profit housing provider under provincial scrutiny***

**By Nathan Griffiths, *Vancouver Sun*, June 5, 2023**

Five months after two fires broke out at Sereenas Housing for Women in the Downtown Eastside, inspectors found nearly a half dozen additional fire safety issues, including problems with fire extinguishers, emergency exits, and electrical systems. The two fires, which occurred early on a Saturday morning in September 2022, damaged at least five rooms and displaced more than 50 women. The supportive housing building, which is operated by Atira Women's Resource Society, is home to 56 women. It is one of several Atira-operated properties in Vancouver with current or recent fire and safety issues, according to an analysis of a building-safety database from the City of Vancouver obtained by Postmedia through FOI. The analysis comes as Premier David Eby announced the province would begin "physically inspecting all Atira-operated buildings" this week.

[6]

***Ad agency linked to top B.C. NDP official paid almost \$900,000 in 2023***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, Feb. 16, 2024**

B.C.'s NDP government spent nearly \$6.3 million last year for companies to create ministry advertising campaigns. The total is the aggregate of fees and expenses, including subcontractor costs and agency hard costs, according to a list obtained under the FOI law. The amounts paid to the 14 suppliers for 63 assignments do not include GST. One of those suppliers, Now Communications Group Inc., received \$881,000 for 14 assignments. NDP campaign workers established the company after Mike Harcourt's 1991 election victory. Its former CEO and partner, Marie Della Mattia, was the Deputy Minister of Government Communications and Public Engagement (GCPE) from November 2022 until earlier this month.

[7]

***TheBreaker.news obtains B.C. Place Stadium's 2026 World Cup contract***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, June 24, 2024**

More than two years after FIFA named Vancouver's B.C. Place Stadium one of 16 North American sites of the 2026 World Cup, B.C. Pavilion Corporation (PavCo) has finally revealed the contract that has triggered nearly \$600 million in costs for taxpayers. PavCo, the Crown corporation that operates B.C. Place, had previously released 120, almost totally greyed-out pages after this reporter's April 2022 FOI request. On June 21, in response to this reporter's appeal to the Information Commissioner, PavCo released a partially censored version of the 96-page stadium agreement and appendices. The contract was agreed with FIFA's domestic subsidiary, the Canadian Soccer Association, in advance of 2022's host city awards.

[8]

***'Spillover risk' of COVID-19 from minks to humans: Inside the clash between doctors and the B.C. government over outbreaks on farms***

**By Joanna Chiu, *Toronto Star*, April 27, 2021**

According to the World Health Organization, the COVID 19 virus can mutate among infected minks and variants have been transmitted back into humans. While the ethics of fur farming continues to be an ongoing debate, public health concerns over mink farms should be paramount, Dr. Jan Hajek argues. He is critical of the B.C. government's response so far, based on a cache of B.C. Ministry of Agriculture mink farm inspection reports, which became public after an FOI request by the Fur-Bearers animal welfare group. He referred to a Jan. 14, 2021 internal briefing note titled "Policy approaches for fur farming in B.C.," which emphasized ethical and animal welfare opposition to fur farms. The government is coming at the issue from the wrong angle, and this miscalculation can cost human lives, Hajek said.

[9]

***Internal government documents reveal B.C.'s 9-1-1 system was unprepared for heat wave, as NDP set to weaken information-access laws***

**By Wendy Cox and James Keller, *Globe and Mail*, Oct. 21, 2021**

During Question Period, the Opposition released FOI documents obtained under the act to show that the province's E-Comm system, the agency that manages 911 calls, was woefully understaffed. In early June, three weeks before a deadly heat wave, a data analyst for the agency warned that calls for an ambulance had been going up and the response time by the ambulance service had been declining. The analyst wrote that the BC Ambulance Service "is compromising public safety overall by negatively impacting 911 answerability." Between June 20 to July 29, historic heat records were shattered and the BC Coroners Service and the province reported 569 "heat-related deaths." Most of the fatalities were people 70 years and older.

[10]

***City hall knew dismantling of Hastings encampment would leave people at risk***

**By Nathan Griffiths, *Vancouver Sun*, June 5, 2023**

Internal emails at Vancouver city hall in the days leading up to April's dismantling of the Downtown Eastside encampment show that officials knew there would not be enough beds to shelter people who were displaced. After the decampment, Postmedia filed an FOI request with the City and received reports, written by a manager in the city's engineering department, detailing how the dismantling of the Hastings Street encampment went down. The city's own weekly status reports on the Hastings encampment suggested that there were only about a dozen shelter beds available on any given day - far less than the 100-plus people who were expected to be displaced when city crews swooped in to remove tents and makeshift structures.

[11]

***Fire, safety problems at city SROs often linger for months, data shows***

**By Nathan Griffiths, *Vancouver Sun*, June 12, 2023**

Problems with fire alarms, extinguishers and sprinkler systems in Vancouver's downtown SRO buildings typically take over 2½ months to get fixed, according to data obtained by Postmedia News. Damaged walls and ceilings typically take more than five months to be repaired and even basic building maintenance can go unresolved for nearly two months. Three people were killed and hundreds were displaced last year because of fires in the single-room-occupancy buildings. Postmedia filed an FOI request for the city's building safety database, which contains information on buildings with maintenance, health or safety issues. Copies of the database published on the city's website and online are fragmented and frequently out-of-date.

[12]

***WorkSafeBC finds cause of fatal Cineplex site collapse***

**By Brent Richter, *North Shore News*, Aug. 16, 2023**

A Metro Vancouver demolition company committed numerous occupational health and safety and Workers Compensation Act violations leading up to the collapse of a floor at their North Vancouver job site, which left one worker dead and another seriously injured, WorkSafeBC has found. The incident happened on Aug. 25, 2021 at the old Cineplex theatre on West Esplanade, which Done Right Demolition and Disposal had been contracted to bring down for

redevelopment. WorkSafeBC's report, released under FOI, concludes that the combined load of the excavator and several weeks of the accumulated demolition debris "exceeded the bearing capacity of the supporting walls and caused the progressive failure of the masonry wall connections, resulting in the total collapse of the floor."

[13]

### ***Flooding BC Dikes***

**By Staff, *Canadian Press*, Sept. 13, 2023**

Officials with the British Columbia government and the City of Merritt were aware of significant problems with dikes for several years before torrential rainfall pushed rivers over their banks and inundated the community in November 2021. Documents released through an FOI request by the B.C. office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives show an engineer contracted by the city found numerous problems in 2018. The engineer reiterated the same concerns every year until 2021, five months before the flooding forced more than seven thousand people out of their homes. His last report recommended immediate maintenance to address high-priority concerns, including severe erosion.

[14]

### ***Truck Crashes into Overpasses on B.C.'S Highways Are Adding Up***

**By Gordon Hoekstra, *Vancouver Sun*, Feb 5, 2024**

There have been 34 strikes by trucks of overpasses and bridges since the end of 2021, according to a list compiled by the B.C. Ministry of Transportation. Industry blames inexperienced drivers, lack of training for overheight loads, lack of communication between dispatchers and drivers, firms that push their drivers into unsafe conditions, low pay, and shippers who seek out cutrate carriers. But there is also a question of whether the sector has embraced a safety culture, according to interviews with truckers and others in the business. Postmedia examined online job ads, FOI records that provided information on overpass damage and details of crashes, safety certifications in the trucking industry, independent reports on B.C. trucking safety and U.S. trucking safety data.

[15]

### ***Workers reported multiple near-misses before fatal Oakridge crane accident***

**By Jon Hernandez, *CBC News*, July 26, 2024**

Workers on the Vancouver Oakridge construction site reported multiple near-misses involving cranes in the months before a fatal incident that killed a worker, including a crane failure where a block crashed onto a roof — an incident that wasn't reported to site leaders until the following morning. Yuridia Flores, a mother of two from Mexico, was killed on Feb. 21 when the tower crane at the Oakridge redevelopment site dropped its load onto a building, which subsequently fell onto her. The incident is still under investigation by WorkSafeBC. Through FOI, CBC News received records of all complaints made about the Oakridge redevelopment site, led by prime contractor EllisDon, at West 41st and Cambie Street in Vancouver between Jan. 1, 2023 and Feb. 29, 2024

[16]

***A student's death in a UBC dorm reveals gaps in how universities deal with emergencies***

**By Jack Rabb, *Globe and Mail*, June 22, 2024**

Since Kyle Sohn died in 2022, UBC has changed the way staff respond to such emergencies, but his parents say key gaps remain. The overdose death earlier this year of another student, at the University of Victoria, raised similar questions about the responsibilities and training of residence staff – and students themselves – when responding to students in a medical crisis. His parents filed FOI requests and have gathered documents to piece together what happened to their son. Their findings show conflicting policies on when residence staff can enter a student's room, intervention the Sohns believe could have saved their son. Now they're calling on the school to implement more comprehensive safety measures for students, including the creation of a dedicated on-campus emergency response team, one that has been under consideration for at least seven years.

[17]

***B.C. ministry warned birth alerts 'illegal and unconstitutional' months before banning them***

**By Bayleigh Marelj, *Canadian Press*, and *IndigiNews*, Jan. 12, 2024**

Months before British Columbia officially ended the controversial practice of birth alerts, government lawyers advised the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) that the practice was “illegal and unconstitutional” and posed a “litigation risk,” according to records obtained via FOI by IndigiNews. When a social worker feels an expectant parent may put their newborn at risk, they can issue a “birth alert” or a “hospital alert,” flagging the expectant parent to hospital staff without their consent, and directing them to notify social workers as soon as the baby's born. If birth alerts aren't legal, this could have important implications for the hundreds, if not thousands, of families across Canada that have been impacted by them.

[18]

***Police report shows 'Baby Mac' daycare operator was allegedly operating illegally for 4th time the day B.C. toddler died***

**By David Molko, *CTV News*, April 14, 2021**

The East Vancouver unlicensed child-care provider facing criminal charges in connection with the death of Macallan Wayne Saini, also known as Baby Mac, was allegedly operating illegally the day the toddler died in her care, according to an official report from Vancouver police. The stunning allegation comes three years after a CTV News investigation alleged that Yasmine Saad broke the law three times, at three separate locations, in 2010, 2012, and in 2016, by having too many children in her care. In January 2016, one year before 16-month-old Baby Mac died, records obtained by CTV News through FOI show Saad called a licensing officer the day after inspectors visited the daycare to indicate she had reduced the number of children in her care, and was in compliance. There is no record of further follow up visits.

[19]

***Parents demand B.C. schools do more to improve air quality as triple epidemic rages***

**By Lori Culbert, *Vancouver Sun*, Jan. 20, 2023**

Since COVID arrived in 2020, the Education Ministry says it has spent \$153 million on 260 ventilation improvement projects at schools, including filter upgrades and replacement of air handling units. The debate is of particular importance right now with the triple epidemic of COVID-19, the flu and RSV..... The ministry's own ventilation technical advisory panel acknowledged at its first meeting in December 2021 that "MERV-13 (filters) have been a challenge for school districts given that they can't be easily integrated into existing HVAC systems," according to documents obtained by Vancouver parent Tracy Casavant under an FOI request.

[20]

***Private daycares squeezed out by public programs, despite demand***

**By Xiao Xu, *Globe and Mail*, May 25, 2024**

On May 16, the B.C. government announced the latest round of grants for groups expanding or creating new childcare spaces. A 2021 internal document from the Ministry of Education and Child Care, released by the BC United Party under FOI, indicated that only public organizations, Indigenous governments and non-profits would be eligible for provincial child-care space creation funding. This approach was to “further signal government’s move away from market-based child care towards a universal, co-ordinated child-care system,” states the note. The grants can run up to \$500,000 for costs related to minor renovations or equipment – and higher for bigger renovation, building and expansion projects.

[21]

***How the families of those in long-term care see the COVID crisis should give us pause***

**By Gordon Hoekstra, *Vancouver Sun*, June 8, 2022**

The B.C. government is working on a standard funding model for long-term care homes to fix problems of fairness, transparency and consistency - and to ensure sustainable and equal quality of care is provided to B.C.'s most vulnerable population, according to internal documents. There is no consistent formula for how the nearly 300 care homes with public-funded beds receive government money. According to B.C. Ministry of Health documents obtained through FOI, the issue was highlighted five years ago in a 2017 residential care staffing review report, under the then-B.C. Liberal government, which concluded there was a lack of consistency and transparency in the funding model.

[22]

***Giving cops an instinct for animals; Training police how to deal with domestic and wild animals will reduce use of lethal force, advocates say***

**By Suzanne Baustad, *The Province* (Vancouver), Aug. 29, 2021**

Gunshots fired by municipal police and RCMP in encounters with animals account for most shootings by police in B.C., yet in an era of evidence-based policing, little is known about these cases. In 803 of the 1,049 firearm incidents reported by police to the B.C. Ministry of Public Safety from 2007 to 2019, police discharged firearms at domestic and wild animals, including dogs, bears, cougars, raccoons, deer, coyotes and sea otters. Use of force surveys for 2007 to 2019 obtained by Postmedia in response to FOI requests show that when police use lethal force in B.C., 77 per cent of the time the target is an animal. But the data provided by police is limited and recent changes to the ministry survey mean that even less is known about animal shootings.

[23]

### ***Heat dome killed 650,000 farm animals***

**By Stefan Labbe, *Times-Colonist* (Victoria), Sept. 29, 2021**

The heat dome that scorched B.C. in June 2021 has been linked to hundreds of thousands of farm animal deaths. At least 651,000 farm animals were killed, according to several industry groups which disclosed the animal mortality data in FOI requests. Camille Labchuk, lawyer and executive director of the advocacy group Animal Justice, obtained data on excess deaths for chicks, egg-laying hens, broiler chickens and turkeys. Industry groups representing dairy cows and hogs said they did not keep such records. In the Fraser Valley, temperatures surpassed 43 C for two days straight. For Labchuk, the death toll lays bare a farming sector without the necessary oversight to ensure animal welfare. The B.C. government currently relies on the SPCA to investigate complaints of animal cruelty, but it has limited resources

[24]

### ***These are B.C.'s deadliest communities - for bears***

**By Stefan Labbe, *Times-Colonist* (Victoria), July 6, 2022**

Every year, the B.C. Conservation Officer Service kills hundreds of bears across British Columbia in a bid to protect public safety. And every year, wildlife advocates say the system fails to adequately protect the lives of the animals, such as Lesley Fox, executive director of The Fur-Bearers, a North Vancouver-based wildlife protection organization. Her organization published a database detailing bear killings in every community across the province from 2015 to 2021. The numbers, drawn from documents obtained in an FOI request to the B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, indicate 3,779 black bears were killed in the seven years ending in 2021.

[25]

### ***Dogs and cats injured or killed in wildlife traps every year, research finds***

**By St. John Alexander, *CTV News*, April 12, 2023**

Animal traps set for wildlife were responsible for injuring or killing at least 173 cats or dogs over a five-year period in Canada, according to research by The Fur-Bearers. The animal rights charity collected data from almost every province by filing FOI. The group found that 56 dogs and cats were caught in wildlife traps in British Columbia, 30 in Alberta. The Fur-Bearers' director of advocacy, Aaron Hofman, said not only are pets hurt, but owners can feel helpless and terrified if they see their four-legged friends being trapped. The group recommends



mandatory reporting when a domestic animal is trapped, tags for all equipment, and at the very least, clear signage when a trap is in an area.

[26]

***Province bargaining away public access to the backcountry, enthusiasts argue***

**By Sarah Grochowski, *The Province* (Vancouver), May 24, 2024**

Every two years, the province reviews and updates hunting regulations based on information on wildlife populations as well as recommendations from scientists and stakeholders. Following its last review, in 2022, the province converted moose and caribou hunts in the Peace region to limited entry from a general open season. Internal government emails and documents obtained by the B.C. Wildlife Federation through FOI showed the changes came in opposition to many biologists who worked at the ministry – and were "unlikely" to aid the declining moose population in the north. "It is not only controversial with stakeholders, but also very much not supported by the bio(logists) internally," reads a June 1, 2021, email from B.C.'s ungulate specialist to a provincial associate director of wildlife.

[27]

***Doc examines sinister side of tech***

**Mike Devlin, *Times-Colonist* (Victoria), June 20, 2021**

Discriminator, director Brett Gaylor's new independent film about facial recognition software, is as close to a horror movie Hollywood has ever produced. The Victoria filmmaker's short film about how technology companies are worming their way into our lives has a doomsday quality to it, and should leave viewers an overwhelming sense of dread.... When he discovered, through FOI requests, that photos of him and photos he had taken of others - including shots of him and his wife on their honeymoon - had been used by a variety of companies more than 5,000 times, including ones in the military, he knew the situation deserved a deep dive.

[28]

***Coquitlam creek contamination spells warning for Metro Vancouver sewers***

**By Stefan Labbe, *Tri City News* (Coquitlam), May 1, 2021**

Straddling the border of Coquitlam and Burnaby, Stoney Creek is the largest tributary of the Brunette watershed and one of the most important spawning grounds for Coho and Chum salmon in Vancouver. It's a vital creek in the Fraser River watershed, but in the last several years documents obtained via FOI requests to the city of Coquitlam and Metro Vancouver reveal bubbling sewage has surfaced from a nearby trunk line over a dozen times, littering roadways with toilet paper and human waste and raising questions over the long-term survival of spawning salmon in the Brunette River tributary. It supports over 60 species of birds, a variety of mammals and countless insect and plants.

[29]

***B.C. opposition to probe disappoints First Nation; FOI request shows reluctance to examine selenium pollution in the Elk Valley***

**By Derrick Penner, *Vancouver Sun*, Nov. 8, 2022**

The Ktunaxa First Nation in southeastern B.C. thought they were making progress in convincing Canada to take part in a joint federal cross-border examination of selenium pollution from coal mining in the Elk Valley. They were disappointed, however, to learn the province was pushing Ottawa behind the scenes to not join the cross-border panel, according to a string of communications between B.C. and Ottawa released under an FOI request by the Ktunaxa. That effort garnered the support of Montana and the U.S. State Department, and emails indicate that Canada was co-operating on a potential reference to the International Joint Commission. Those communications, however, make B.C.'s opposition to such a reference clear, including an April 14 letter to Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly that states "there are other, more efficient ways to address concerns around selenium."

[30]

***B.C. to feds: don't issue emergency order to save the endangered spotted owl***

**By Sarah Cox, *The Narwhal*, July 25, 2023**

The B.C. government is lobbying intently behind the scenes to dissuade the federal cabinet from issuing an emergency order to protect the endangered spotted owl. 'An emergency habitat protection order could increase protection by 120,000 hectares of suitable habitat that occurs throughout the historic range of spotted owl, which will have significant impacts on forest sector jobs and provincial revenue,' states the two-page briefing note prepared for B.C. Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Nathan Cullen and released to *The Narwhal* through FOI. The spotted owl has become a symbol of B.C.'s failure to protect imperilled wildlife and the province's on-going destruction of old-growth forests.

[31]

***B.C.'s dike protection scandal exposed***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, Sept. 24, 2023**

Torrential rains and floods devastated the Interior and Fraser Valley during November 2021's parade of pineapple expresses. But provincial, regional and municipal authorities were not prepared. They could have and should have been. A researcher with the B.C. office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives used the FOI law to investigate dike inspection reports from 2017 to 2021. Ben Parfitt collected more than 5,000 pages from the Ministry of Forests and communities at risk of flooding, Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Merritt, Princeton and Richmond. He found no evidence that B.C.'s inspector of dikes issued any orders to improve protection for people and property.

[32]

***'Hard to believe it's real': B.C.'s energy regulator repeatedly gave Coastal GasLink a pass on alleged environmental infractions***

**By Matt Simmons, *The Narwhal*, Oct. 11, 2023**

A review of 40 inspection reports show the regulator identified more than 80 potential infractions at Coastal GasLink worksites but enforcement officers only flagged five as violations of

provincial regulations. The Narwhal spent months sorting through publicly available records and data, analyzing government documents obtained through FOI and poring over provincial laws and regulations to examine how the pipeline construction is being monitored. The results detail how the BC Energy Regulator, an industry-funded government agency that manages oil and gas activities, was given responsibility for overseeing compliance with a bevy of provincial and federal laws — and what that looks like on the ground. Some experts say the reality is there is a pattern of lax oversight that is putting public safety and environmental protection at risk.

[33]

***After complaint to information commissioner, Park Board releases expert report from Stanley Park logging contractor***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, Feb. 13, 2024**

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation says it has not accounted for thousands of trees cut down in Stanley Park. .... A reporter applied Nov. 22 for the tree inventory, tree removal plan and arborist's report, but the city sent a \$450 invoice almost a month later, claiming it needed 18 hours for "locating, retrieving and producing records, and preparing them for disclosure." The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner notified the city's FOI office On Feb. 8 that it had assigned an investigator. At almost 5 p.m. on Feb. 9, Tuerlings notified a reporter by email that the Blackwell report had been published on the city's website.

[34]

***Parkland report outlines lessons learned from refinery emission that spread stench across Metro Vancouver***

**By Chad Pawson, *CBC News*, Sept. 4, 2024**

The company that owns and operates a gasoline and diesel producing refinery in Burnaby, B.C., says an internal investigation into an "emissions event" that spread a stench across Metro Vancouver will allow it to improve how it guards equipment against extreme cold and how it shares information with community members. The report from Parkland was released seven months after an equipment malfunction during a restart of activities at the refinery following temperatures as low as -13 C. FOI requests made by CBC News for city documents revealed that Parkland had out-of-date contact information for the Burnaby Fire Department, the city and Fraser Health. A similar FOI request made to Metro Vancouver revealed that the regional district questioned how Parkland planned to use a third-party company to do ambient air-quality monitoring after the event.

[35]

***One year ago today, Dr. Tam's fateful Wuhan virus email to provincial, territorial counterparts***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, Jan. 2, 2021**

What follows below is Dr. Theresa Tam's first memo about an "undiagnosed viral pneumonia in China" to provincial and territorial health officers, obtained by theBreaker.news via FOI. Tam's Jan. 2, 2020 email claimed "authorities in Wuhan/China [are] being transparent in reporting and WHO is engaged," yet "there is no evidence of human to human transmission, and importantly

no cases among healthcare worker contacts reported to date.” The latter changed within days. Wuhan Central Hospital ophthalmologist Dr. Li Wenliang, who had circulated a reporter of a new case of SARS to colleagues on Dec. 30, 2019, was infected. He had apparently been treating a patient who had a stall at the Huanan Seafood Market, the presumed epicentre. The 33-year-old Li, hailed as a whistleblower, died Feb. 7.

[36]

***B.C. envoy sent PPE wishlist to Premier Horgan***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, Jan. 28, 2021**

A year after they announced British Columbia’s first coronavirus patient, Health Minister Adrian Dix and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry appeared for a live TV interview on Jan. 28. Global BC asked Henry what she would have done differently. “If I knew then what I know now, focusing on supporting China and taking measures globally to prevent this virus from spreading,” Henry said. A jaw-dropping statement, after the Chinese Communist Party’s initial response..... Documents obtained by theBreaker.news via FOI show Xi Jinping’s top west coast diplomat wanted millions of pieces of personal protective equipment. B.C.’s stockpiles were already depleted because of NDP government neglect.

[37]

***Behind the scenes of Dr. Henry’s last-ditch resistance to a mask mandate***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, May 2, 2021**

Almost five months after officials in Toronto and Washington state mandated masks to reduce the spread of COVID-19, British Columbia finally required mouths and noses be covered at indoor public spaces in late November. But Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry resisted through much of the fall, just as she had in the spring when she discouraged mask-wearing before reluctantly suggesting homemade versions. Henry made one last bid to keep the status quo, in a Nov. 16-released opinion-editorial. Vancouver Sun and CTV printed the 565-word piece. Email released to theBreaker.news under the FOI law shows that a government communications staffer, a public relations contractor and possibly Henry’s sister Lynn were involved in creating the op-ed, which did not stand the test of time.

[38]

***British Columbia's health minister vows to act on SCMP report that Vancouver care homes delayed declaring Covid-19 outbreaks***

**By Ian Young, *South China Morning Post*, May 15, 2021**

British Columbia's health minister has pledged to look into the circumstances of Covid-19 infections in long-term care homes, in light of a South China Morning Post investigation that revealed at least 192 people had died in Vancouver homes where authorities did not declare outbreaks when an employee first tested positive for the virus. The Post investigation, based on documents obtained under FOI and publicly available statistics, revealed that at least 1,040 people became infected at Vancouver care homes that initially used enhanced surveillance/monitoring when workers fell ill.

[39]

***Coronavirus: Post exposes undisclosed Vancouver outbreaks, as medical chief says relatives blame her for deaths***

**By Ian Young, *South China Morning Post*, May 22, 2021**

Twelve people were infected and two elders died in one outbreak, which was only revealed after the Post told authorities it had documentation of the incident. Provincial Health Officer Dr Bonnie Henry said a second undisclosed retirement community outbreak was identified as a result, with both 'managed aggressively'..... Regarding the outbreak at the Terraces, Henry blamed its omission from public records on VCH... The January 7 VCH document clearly lists the Terraces with the six other facilities under a red-banner heading that says "Enhanced Surveillance - Single Staff Case". The other six also appear on a list of facilities that employed enhanced surveillance and not outbreak status, that was provided by VCH this month after an FOI request by the Post. The Terraces does not.

[40]

***Report slams B.C. on private medicine; Clinics got \$393M despite alleged extra billing***

**By Katie DeRosa, *Vancouver Sun*, Aug. 24, 2022**

The B.C. government has doled out at least \$393 million to for-profit private surgery and medical imaging companies since 2015 to provide services within the public system, all while overlooking unlawful billing practices, according to a new report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' B.C. branch. In a 2019 email exchange between the former owner of False Creek clinic and Deputy Minister of Health Stephen Brown, obtained by CCPA analyst Andrew Longhurst through FOI, the owner expresses his appreciation that the provincial government will provide "long-term, volume guaranteed contracts which will enable us to make an informed decision on the long-term sustainability of this business model."

[41]

***B.C. health minister defends Dr. Bonnie Henry in legislature over response to COVID-19 transmission in schools.***

**By Staff, *CBC News, Burnaby Beacon and Capital Daily*, Oct. 22, 2022**

B.C.'s Health Minister defended Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry in the legislature on Tuesday, after the leader of the B.C. Green Party said British Columbians have been misled about COVID-19 transmissions in schools. Sonia Furstenau questioned Adrian Dix about emails from Henry and public health leaders centred on the province's response to COVID-19 transmission in schools, obtained through FOI and published by the Burnaby Beacon and Capital Daily. Protect Our Province B.C., a group of health-care professionals, scientists and advocates who say they want evidence-based policies, has called for Henry's resignation and a review of B.C. public health leadership.

[42]

***Far fewer B.C. cancer patients are heading south, despite government promises***

**By Andrea Woo, *Globe and Mail*, Nov. 28, 2023**

Six months after British Columbia began sending select cancer patients to the U.S. for radiation therapy, the province is averaging about a dozen patients receiving treatment across the border per week – far fewer than the 50 per week it has contracted. The opposition BC United, which obtained a government report containing the figures through an FOI request, says it shows that the B.C. government is failing to meet its own targets for cancer care. Health Minister Adrian Dix countered that patients have a choice of whether to travel or wait at home, and that the “significant” number choosing to go stateside is still helping to shorten wait times. A *Globe* investigation found that some cancer patients wait months to begin treatment, with delays at one stage compounding overall wait times and increasing the risk of poorer health outcomes.

[43]

***NDP cancer treatment contractor caught overcharging patients***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, Nov. 29, 2023**

The company operating one of the Washington State cancer clinics under contract by the B.C. government must refund millions of dollars to thousands of low income patients. On May 15, NDP Minister of Health Adrian Dix announced that B.C. Cancer Agency had outsourced a limited number of breast and prostate radiation treatments to two PeaceHealth clinics in Bellingham - because B.C. hospitals could not keep up with demand. The B.C. Cancer contract with PeaceHealth, obtained under B.C.’s FOI law, calls for PeaceHealth to treat up to 50 B.C. Cancer-referred patients per week.... PeaceHealth settled, without admitting wrongdoing, after Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson alleged PeaceHealth broke state consumer laws “by failing to screen patients for charity care eligibility prior to attempting to collect payment.” [etc.]

[44]

***Deaths on wait lists at five-year high: report; 17,000 in 2022-23; Worsening despite surge in health spending***

**By Staff, *Vancouver Sun*, Dec. 7, 2023**

The number of Canadians dying while on wait lists for surgery or diagnostic scans has reached a five-year high, according to numbers gathered by government policy watchdog SecondStreet.org. The group's latest policy brief, titled *Died on a Waiting List*, claims that government data collected through FOI requests show more than 17,000 patients died while on wait lists in 2022-23. This includes patients waiting for potential life-saving procedures such as heart operations, and those waiting for quality-of-life operations such as hip surgery. Times on the wait lists varied from less than a week to more than 10 years. "We're seeing governments leave patients for dead. It's deplorable," said report author Colin Craig. "More money won't solve the problem. Governments have tried that for 30 years. Only meaningful health reform will reduce patient suffering."

[45]

***B.C. drug law exemption could cut seizures of some drugs in half***

**By Nathan Griffith, *Vancouver Sun*, Jan. 26, 2023**

Vancouver police seized hundreds of kilograms of illicit drugs in recent years, but they were often just one or two grams at a time. A Postmedia analysis of more than 15,000 drugs seized from July 2020 to July 2022 found that big busts were relatively rare. The typical amount was less than two grams for some of the most common drugs seized by the VPD. The most recent data came from an FOI request posted on the VPD's website that listed illicit drugs seized and tested by Vancouver police from July 2020 to July 2022. The list may not account for all the drugs seized, as drugs intended to be immediately destroyed may not have been tested, according to the VPD. Some drug-policy researchers say the findings are troubling.

[46]

***BC's Cops Weren't Fully Prepared for Drug Decriminalization***

**By Michelle Gamage, *The Tyee*, Jan. 4, 2024**

When British Columbia's drug decriminalization pilot project came into force, only two-thirds of police officers had been trained in what that meant, *The Tyee* has learned. This comes from an FOI document that laid out the meeting minutes of the province's Mental Health Working Group back in January 2023. The records say as of Jan. 30, 2023, the Metro Vancouver Transit Police had the most trained officers with a 96% completion rate, followed by the Central Saanich Police Service and the Delta Police Department, each with an 87% completion rate. At the same time the Nelson Police Department and the Stl'at'imx Tribal Police had a 0% completion rate; the RCMP had a 64% completion rate with the Island district in the lead with 72%.

[47]

***B.C. premier's office directed health authority statement on Richmond drug overdose prevention site***

**By Graeme Wood, *Richmond News*, May 28, 2024**

The day after protesters took to Richmond City Hall to oppose council's motion to explore an overdose prevention site nearby the hospital, the premier's office directed Vancouver Coastal Health to issue a statement to media and the public that such a site would not be moving forward. It came a week after Medical Health Officer Meena Dawar expressed hope that health facilities in the city could move ahead with what's called "eOPS," or "episodic overdose prevention service." Richmond Coun. Kash Heed says of Premier Eby's direct intervention: "It's absolute interference in due process based on what I've read," regarding emails obtained by Glacier Media through FOI, showing communication to and from Dawar on the matter.

[48]

***VPD's street check audit nothing more than a public relations strategy***

**By Kash Heed, editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, Vancouver Sun, March 13, 2021**

An independent study conducted on street checks was commissioned by the Vancouver Police Board last year. Amidst the research, allegations of racist and inappropriate attitudes from officers witnessed on ride-alongs surfaced, although they mysteriously never made it into the final review presented to the board. The information only came to the public's attention through a third party's FOI request. As a consequence, the VPD's newly released audit report spends most of its 36 pages trying to defend the antiquated practice of street checks, even though they fall well short of their own prescribed code of conduct as well as the law.

[49]

***Canada makes 'a start' in cleaning up its money-laundering mess***

**By Terry Glavin, *National Post*, and *Coastal Front*, Dec. 15, 2021**

Vancouver already richly earned its reputation as a money-laundering hub for international swindlers, drug dealers and well-connected high rollers who have helped turn Canada's Pacific coast into one of the most absurdly overpriced real estate markets in the world. Then a local investigation by independent media organization Coastal Front revealed that its FOI request obliged the City of Vancouver to disgorge 750 pages showing that between 2012 and 2021, city officials had accepted nearly 2,000 payments totaling \$13.1 million for everything from property tax payments to municipal cemetery plots - all in stacks of cash. There was no rule requiring staff to ask a bag carrier for identification. There was no regulation requiring staff to report any of the weird transactions to anyone.

[50]

***Health authority report indicates fraud of \$170,000 at B.C. drug treatment centre***

**By Stanley Tromp, *Globe and Mail*, Nov. 18, 2022**

A former accountant at the Kinghaven addiction treatment facility in Abbotsford is under investigation after a probe found that \$170,000 was stolen in 2020. The audit report by the Fraser Health Authority was obtained via the FOI law. The location of another \$130,000 is unknown, it says, adding, "there are over \$700,000 of transactions without adequate documentation that remain in question." The memorandum listed 10 vulnerabilities that enabled fraud such as "no formal system of record and many missing files/documents/invoices."

[51]

***3 years into the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Asian hate still prevalent in Metro Vancouver: advocates***

**By Zahra Premji, *CBC News*, June 13, 2023**

During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, police said anti-Asian hate crimes in Vancouver increased from 12 incidents in 2012 to 98 in 2020 — a 717-per-cent spike. According to data from the VPD website, gathered through FOI, there were 204 hate incidents or crimes in the city reported to police from March 2020 to Dec. 15, 2022. Hate crimes are defined as criminal offences against people or property that are motivated by hate, including assault and uttering threats. Hate incidents refer to a broader range of actions, including those that do not necessarily meet the definition of a crime. These incidents include hurling racial slurs, telling people to "go back to China," stalking, and physical assaulting, among others.



[52]

***Bail granted in more than half of cases where Crown sought detention***

**By Louise Dickson, *Times-Colonist* (Victoria), April 25, 2023**

Judges granted bail in more than half the cases involving violent crime where Crown prosecutors had recommended detention, according to preliminary data released Monday by the B.C. Prosecution Service. The communications counsel for the prosecution service said the data was collected to provide some preliminary insights into how Crown prosecutors were handling bail matters in the period immediately before and after the implementation of the revised bail policy. A number of media had requested the information and it is being released at the same time as an FOI Request, he said. Judges ordered detention in only one-quarter of all bail hearings involving crimes of violence with an accused who was out on bail on other matters.

[53]

***Report blasts B.C.'s anti-gang agency; Critical 123-page review says police unit ineffective at reducing crime, wastes taxpayer dollars***

**By Kim Bolan, *The Province* (Vancouver), Sept. 8, 2023**

B.C.'s anti-gang agency has failed to stem the gang war that has resulted in dozens of murders and public shootings over a two-year period, according to a 123-page report commissioned by the B.C. Public Safety Ministry, obtained by Postmedia through FOI. It said the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit "is neither effective in suppressing gang violence and organized crime nor is it providing the province with an adequate return on investment." The report, almost half of which was redacted before release, stemmed from a review requested by the ministry's policing and security branch into CFSEU-B.C.'s response to a surge in gang violence in the period from December 2020 to March 2022.

[54]

***Investors raised red flags; Authorities were alerted long before alleged \$300-million Ponzi scheme collapsed***

**By Gordon Hoekstra, *The Province* (Vancouver), Jan. 22, 2024**

B.C. financial regulators received complaints about accused fraudster Greg Martel, including that a high-return investment opportunity might be a "scam," years before his alleged \$300-million Ponzi scheme collapsed in 2023. The complaints about Martel's investment schemes were made to the B.C. Financial Services Authority and the B.C. Securities Commission in early 2017 and mid-2021, according to financial services authority records obtained by Postmedia through FOI. On learning complaints had been made well before the scheme collapsed, one investor, Kelly, who wished to be identified only by her first name, said if regulators had dug deeper, investors could have saved tens of millions of dollars.

[55]

***Poll for NDP government found high proportion of Surrey residents prefer RCMP over Surrey Police***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, April 18, 2024**

An NDP government-commissioned survey about Surrey found a high plurality of respondents disagreed with replacing the RCMP with the Surrey Police Service (SPS). “Just over two-in-five Surrey residents (42%) agree with the transition, while just under half (46%) disagree,” said the May 2023 survey by Research Co., obtained via FOI. “The transition is popular among residents aged 18-to-34 (65%) and aged 35-to-49 (50%) but drops among those aged 50-to-64 (22%) and those aged 65-plus (29%).” “Respondents of Indian descent are more likely to agree with the transition (63%) than those of European heritage (35%),” said the Research Co. report.

[56]

***VicPD officers use vehicles as form of force against pedestrians and cyclists, documents say***

**By Staff, *Times-Colonist (Victoria)*, June 25, 2024**

Victoria police officers have used their police vehicles to intentionally hit people on bikes, scooters or on foot, including striking people with the car door or cutting people off to force a collision, at least 12 times in the last decade, according to documents obtained through FOI by Stephen Harrison, a Victoria resident who writes about police accountability, and reports on substantiated allegations against the department. In 2017, a VicPD officer who saw a cyclist not wearing a helmet made a "sharp and sudden turn" in front of the cyclist, leading the person to crash into the side of the police vehicle, according to a report by the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner. The officer "drove recklessly" based on what appeared to be an emotional reaction, causing oncoming vehicles to swerve to avoid the police vehicle, the report says.

[57]

***Gangster's escape raises concerns about jail security***

**By Kim Bolan, *Vancouver Sun*, Dec. 12, 2022**

Days after Wolfpack killer Robby Alkhalil made a spectacular escape from a Port Coquitlam jail in July, two gangsters held at the Surrey Pretrial Centre came close to making their own getaway. Why was a sophisticated organized criminal with endless resources and a history of disappearing not watched more closely? And with the second attempted breakout less than a week later, how secure are B.C. jails? The day after the Alkhalil escape, Melissa Maher, an adviser to Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth, sent him an email about the "key messages" they wanted to get out to the public. "We take any escape or attempted escape extremely seriously and B.C. Corrections will be conducting a comprehensive review into this incident," read one of her messages, released under FOI.

[58]

***Elusive dirty-cash whistleblower to testify***

**By Ian Mulgrew, *Vancouver Sun*, July 20, 2021**

Instead of hearing closing submissions next week, the Cullen Commission has granted participant status to Ross Alderson, the former B.C. Lottery Corp. director of anti-money-laundering, and is arranging for him to testify.... A former Australian police officer who joined

BCLC in 2008 and worked as an investigator at River Rock Casino from 2011 to 2012, Alderson resigned in 2017 as the director of anti-money laundering, overseeing the agency's investigations and intelligence gathering while liaising with law enforcement. He wrote a number of reports and directives regarding casinos, many made public through FOI requests.

[59]

***FOI reveals new Surrey Police Service Deputy Chief paid up to \$320,000***

**By National Police Federation, *Canada NewsWire*, March 10, 2021**

FOI records obtained by the National Police Federation (NPF) shows a newly hired Deputy Chief for the Surrey Police Service is making \$235,000 a year in salary and up to \$320,000 a year with benefits, much more than the B.C. Premier (\$171,790), more than double the Mayor of Surrey (\$147,018), and significantly more than senior RCMP officers. This new information is the latest in a string of exploding expenses related to the police transition, with cost estimates recently tripling to \$64 million. Surrey taxpayers were informed that an average 11% tax increase is coming their way in part to cover the transition costs.

[60]

***Here's how many B.C. government workers got pandemic pay raises, and how much it cost taxpayers, according to a report***

**By Kendra Mangione, *CTV News*, Jan. 24, 2022**

A just-released report suggests taxpayers in British Columbia spent millions more during the pandemic on raises for government workers. According to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, 33,336 B.C. government workers got raises in 2020, at a cost of approximately \$69 million. In 2021, 28,972 got a pay boost, to the tune of about \$47 million. In total, \$116,095,813 went to paying workers more over the two-year period, the report says. Altogether, the data obtained by the CTF via FOI suggested 528,347 government workers at the federal and provincial levels got raises. B.C. director for the CTF Kris Sims pointed out many non-government workers took a pay cut, lost their job or saw their business severely impacted during the same time.

[61]

***Some of the people at the top of a health-care system in crisis are among the top earners in B.C.'s public sector***

**By Glenda Luymes, Nathan Griffiths and Katie Derosa, *Vancouver Sun*, Dec. 16, 2022**

Some of the people at the top of a health-care system in crisis are among the top earners in B.C.'s public sector. More than one-third of the province's 100 highest-paid public servants are employed by the Provincial Health Services Authority, or PHSA, according to the 11th edition of Postmedia's popular online public sector salary database. The figures were gathered from publicly available compensation disclosure reports and FOI requests. Remuneration information includes base salary, overtime, vacation payouts and severance. The database, which contains the names and wages of nearly 125,000 B.C. public sector workers making more than \$75,000 in 2020 and the 2020-21 fiscal year, shows 37 of the top 100 public sector earners work for PHSA.

[62]

***"Damn near extinction:" Interior steelhead run expected to be very small***

**By Staff, *Vancouver Sun*, Oct. 17, 2021**

A decades-long slide in Interior steelhead populations could escalate this year with only 58 fish expected to spawn in the Thompson watershed and 27 in the Chilcotin.... But while the research was peer-reviewed by the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat, it was never released publicly. In producing a Scientific Advisory Report to inform government decision-making, Fisheries and Oceans altered key points in order to support "status quo commercial salmon harvesting," according to provincial government officials, whose comments were found in 1,600 pages of documents and correspondence obtained by the B.C. Wildlife Federation through FOI requests.

[63]

***Tree crimes and misdemeanours: How B.C.'s forests have become flashpoints for poachers and protesters alike***

**By Lyndsie Bourgon, *Globe and Mail*, June 24, 2022**

Last spring, cedar and Douglas fir trees were disappearing at an alarming rate from forests on Vancouver Island and the lush rainforests of B.C.'s Sunshine Coast. Law enforcement, forest managers and local citizens interested in quelling timber poaching argue that the financial penalties are just too low, making the risk worthwhile. While the fine for poaching wood from provincial Crown lands in B.C. can be as much as \$1-million, in most cases poachers are fined \$200 or less. And while thousands of "forest crimes" (the most common are timber theft, illegal harvesting and arson) were reported in the decade prior to the increase in 2021, documents I accessed through [FOI] showed that only 728 tickets were issued for removing or destroying wood in that time.

[64]

***Companies logged B.C. forests 170 times without authorization since 2021, records show***

**By Ainslie Cruickshank, *The Narwhal*, Sept. 3, 2024**

On about 170 occasions between January 2021 and July 2024, companies either cut, damaged or destroyed forest - or removed timber from the forest - without provincial authorization, according to B.C.'s compliance and enforcement database. (The database does not include incidents prior to 2021.) In June, The Narwhal filed An FOI request asking for the total amount of unauthorized harvesting documented between Jan. 2020 and June 2024. While the requested records have not yet been released, a government official said the B.C. Forests Ministry may not be able to provide a clear picture of how many hectares forestry companies have logged without authorization in recent years. That's because the province doesn't consistently track unauthorized logging by forestry companies, according to information the official shared with The Narwhal through FOI.

[65]

***Damning report into BCEHS workplace culture released after CTV News FOI request***

**By Ian Holliday and Penny Daflos, *CTV News*, July 7, 2023**

The New Democrats recently released a year-old report on a "boys club" culture of harassment and coverup that flourished during their watch inside the provincial ambulance service. Predictably, the release was prompted by an application by CTV News under the FOI law. The independent review of the organizational culture at B.C. Emergency Health Services was completed in 2022 by Cathe Gaskell, a U.K.-based specialist at examining workplace harassment in health-care settings. A few excerpts from her 37-page report should illustrate why the New Democrats were reluctant to share the findings of her confidential interviews with staffers in the ambulance service. "Examples of inappropriate touching included stroking, smacking, and rubbing against by males to females."

[66]

***Emailed concerns over in-person rush reveal further potential provincial health violations at frats***

**By Lalaine Alindogan, *The Ubyyssey*, June 29, 2021**

Emails obtained by The Ubyyssey through FOI confirmed the existence of multiple complaints of potential COVID-19 violations among UBC fraternities around the time of their recruitment process. In September 2020, the Interfraternity Council (IFC) allowed frats to hold in-person rush, permitting face-to-face gatherings and prompting questions of what UBC fraternities will be doing to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks. Shortly following that, nearly 1,300 people signed an unsuccessful petition asking the IFC to reverse their plans. The concerns made it to the provincial level — an email obtained by The Ubyyssey showed a provincial medical health officer notifying UBC admin that Dr. Bonnie Henry had been receiving concerned emails related to rush events at frats.

[67]

***Canada set to name foreign labs, universities that pose risk to national security***

**By Joanna Chiu, *Toronto Star*, May 8, 2023**

Ottawa is in "advanced stages" of drafting a list of entities that pose a risk to national security, and top universities are prepared to avoid working with these entities despite what could be a loss of \$100 million or more in annual research funding from foreign partners.... According to research partnership contracts between UBC and Huawei obtained by the Star through FOI in 2020, UBC appeared to receive millions of dollars in research funding from Huawei, where some deals denied UBC intellectual property rights. According to multiple contracts dated between 2014 and 2018, UBC granted Huawei "all right, title and interest to intellectual property," retaining for itself only the right to use "foreground intellectual property solely for the purposes of teaching and other academic and non-commercial uses."

[68]

***Agents offer 'big dreams and promises' but provide a nightmare for many international students***

**By Hardip Johal, *Vancouver Sun*, March 10, 2023**

Dupinder Singh is among the 25 per cent of international students studying in Canada who are estimated to have used agents to help navigate Canada's education system. Students from India are most likely to have paid large fees for agents, but there is little accountability, often leading to exploitation and disappointment.... Degree-granting institutions like these typically vet the agents to protect students. Information obtained through FOI showed Langara College receives more than \$70 million in international student tuition yearly, and pays more than \$2 million to agents, or around 3% of all international tuition. The use of agents is so problematic that some universities have established policies to protect students from unscrupulous agents.

[70]

***Report of sexual harassment and bullying released regarding University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine***

**By Penny Daflos, CTV News, Jan. 23, 2024**

The University of British Columbia's Faculty of Medicine has had numerous reports of bullying and sexual harassment of student eye doctors in the ophthalmology program, according to a report from CTV News Vancouver. It says whistleblowers reached out to the news organization last year stating the university was brushing aside complaints by students and trainees for years. CTV says they have obtained a written report from UBC that an "environmental scan" was completed by a third party and found unacceptable behavior which resulted in students being reassigned to "safe learning environments." Lawyer Renee Miller conducted the report that was dated May 20, 2022. CTV News had filed an FOI request for Miller's findings and were given the runaround by UBC.

[71]

***'Deeply troubling': BC Hydro secretly handed out \$430 million in Site C dam contracts***

**By Sarah Cox, The Narwhal, April 26, 2023**

Over the past three years, undisclosed BC Hydro employees quietly awarded more than \$430 million in contracts - without any competition - to three dozen companies and consultants for work on the troubled Site C hydro dam. SNC-Lavalin, which in 2013 was banned from World Bank contracts for eight years due to fraud and corruption, was granted more than \$62 million in sole-source contracts for engineering services on the hugely over-budget project, according to the list, released by BC Hydro in response to an FOI request. In one case, SNC-Lavalin was awarded a contract worth more than \$25 million without any competing bids. 'It's shocking,' said B.C. Green Party leader Sonia Furstenu. 'This whole project has been so shrouded in secrecy and lack of transparency.'

[72]

***Report removed praise for heat pumps***

**By Stefan Labbe, Times-Colonist (Victoria), Aug. 10, 2023**

A report weighing the role natural gas could play in B.C.'s clean energy transition was edited to remove sections stating electrification and heat pumps are a more efficient way to decarbonize the province, documents obtained through FOI show. The study, which looked at the future supply of renewable and low-carbon gas, was first published in March 2022 as a commission

from gas provider FortisBC, the B.C. Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, and the B.C. Bioenergy Network, a research group created with a grant from the province and housed at the UBC. On March 3, the report was circulated in a press release. Nine days later, the document was replaced online with several passages removed, e.g., the City of Vancouver's plan to phase out natural gas should be extended across the province. Other statements appear to have been altered to paint a more neutral picture of future gas demand.

[73]

***Genocide denier remains advisor to B.C.'s Premier***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, April 6, 2021**

Bill Yee, a retired B.C. Provincial Court judge with a history of supporting the Chinese Communist Party government remains an advisor to Premier John Horgan, despite denying China is committing genocide against Uyghur Muslims..... While he was president of the Vancouver Chinese Benevolent Association, Yee supported the China consulate's campaign against a UBC statue to commemorate the Tiananmen Square massacre. In 1991, Yee wrote UBC president David Strangway on the letterhead of the pro-Beijing CBA, urging him to cancel the local replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue that Chinese soldiers destroyed on June 4, 1989 when they violently ended a peaceful protest by students seeking democracy. A copy of the letter was obtained under the FOI laws by documentary filmmaker Ina Mitchell.

[74]

***Pandemic polling was Horgan's ticket to majority in 2020's snap election***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, Dec. 22, 2022**

The turning point in John Horgan's five years as B.C. premier came Sept. 21, 2020, when he announced a snap election between the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. He famously justified breaking the fixed election date law and prematurely ending the NDP's confidence and supply deal with the Green Party by claiming the "best way forward is to put the politics behind us." Why was Horgan so confident? It turns out he had the roadmap for victory beside him all along. Nearly 6,000 pages obtained via FOI include two dozen reports by NDP polling firm Strategic Communications Inc. from April and May 2020. Specifically, the knowledge of what voters were thinking about the issues that concerned them, thanks to daily polling reports for cabinet that were originally intended to shape the NDP government's response to the pandemic.

[75]

***Documents shed more light on why the NDP government rejected bid for the 2030 Winter Olympics***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, Aug. 15, 2023**

Almost six months after the NDP government refused to fund a bid to bring the Winter Olympics back to B.C. in 2030, senior bureaucrats finally explained the decision in a private meeting. Documents released under FOI show Neilane Mayhew, the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, led an April 14 technical briefing in-person and on web conference for Canadian Olympic and Paralympic officials and leaders of the Four Host First Nations to "talk

through the factors that the province considered when evaluating the 2030 Hosting Proposal, including: estimated costs, identified risks and other considerations.” The presentation document included the province’s estimate of potential costs and risks, but the dollar figures were censored.

[76]

***Kevin Falcon vows to reopen B.C. offices in China***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, Sept. 8, 2023**

BC United leader Kevin Falcon promised alumni of China’s flagship university that he would forge closer ties with China if he becomes premier after the next election. Falcon told an Aug. 27 meeting at the University of B.C., hosted by the Guanghua Vancouver Alumni Association of Peking University, that he would restore the standalone trade offices the NDP government closed in late 2019, according to a summary by the event’s host..... When the BC Liberal Party was in power, the government spent \$8.4 million over three years to rent and resource an office in Beijing’s Kerry Centre. That was according to a 2017 paper by entrepreneur and podcaster Andrew Johns, based on FOI disclosures.

[77]

***The feds cut Trans Mountain a \$1.8M tax break in the ’50s for a pipeline***

**By Kamyar Razavi, *Global News*, Dec. 13, 2023**

The Chief of a First Nation in British Columbia is angry and frustrated at pipeline giant Trans Mountain and the federal government, saying both have failed to fairly compensate his community for all the crude oil that’s been pumped beneath their land since the 1950s. And he’s not letting go.... Global News used FOI to obtain the “Memorandum of Understanding” signed between the City of Coquitlam, near Vancouver, and Trans Mountain. City documents reveal the pipeline company cut a cheque for \$769,300 on June 10, 2021, along with several smaller cheques for just over \$2,000 each (totalling \$8,050) for rights-of-way through various tracts of city land that the pipeline passes through.

[78]

***Breaking through the B.C. government’s polling secrecy***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, March 9, 2024**

The BC Liberals chose Victoria lawyer Roxanne Helme in June 2020, hoping to regain the Oak Bay seat that Ida Chong held from 1996 to 2013. Then Helme picked up her home phone to a robocall. “As a result of the questions asked on the telephone poll, I became concerned that I was being polled by a department of the provincial government for what I considered to be political purposes,” Helme swore in an affidavit. Helme eventually finished third on Oct. 24, 2020. But this reporter’s quest to learn how a taxpayer-funded poll informed Horgan’s power play prompted Helme to file an FOI request in 2021 for government polling records from the first nine months of 2020. She received five reports, totalling nearly 2,900 heavily censored pages. The OIPC ordered more released upon her appeal.



[79]

***Campaign against North Vancouver chlorine plant secretly funded by competing company***

**By Zak Vescera, *CBC News*, Sept. 11, 2024**

An online lobbying campaign against a North Vancouver chemical plant is secretly funded by one of that company's competitors. For months, the anonymous directors of the website "Keep North Vancouver Safe" have spent thousands of dollars trying to convince local elected officials to stop chlorine production at a facility run by Chemtrade Logistics Inc. in the District of North Vancouver. . . . . Jason Craik, the Crestview lobbyist, had also directly approached officials at the municipal level. On April 1, he wrote an email to District of North Vancouver Mayor Mike Little asking to speak with him about Chemtrade's lease on behalf of "a group of concerned stakeholders," according to a copy of those messages the IJF obtained through FOI.

[80]

***Smalltown vigilante action fills in gaps in road service***

**By Justine Hunter, *Globe and Mail*, Jan. 4, 2023**

After months of inquiries and a fight to access documents under British Columbia's FOI law, the tiny community of Tahsis has managed to embarrass the province into helping them out to repair the route. Head Bay Road runs 62 kilometres from Tahsis to Gold River, where it connects to paved routes and the rest of Vancouver Island. The road winds through mountainous terrain, and in the winter, local drivers generally accept that they need a four-wheel drive with studded snow tires to get in and out of town. It's also recommended that they bring along a snow shovel, VHF radio and basic survival equipment. If there are trees down, a chainsaw can also come in handy.

[81]

***Emails reveal Moccasin Flats demolition efforts***

**By Arthur Williams, *Prince George Citizen*, Dec. 1, 2022**

Senior city managers spent weeks planning to clear out the Lower Patricia homeless encampment known as Moccasin Flats, in violation of an existing court order, internal emails show. The emails, obtained by The Citizen from BC Housing and the City of Prince George through FOI, chronicle the lead up to Nov. 17, 2021. On that day, City of Prince George bylaw, parks and solid waste staff used heavy equipment to remove tents, structures and other belongings left by people relocated from the camp, despite a October 25, 2021 court order to leave the location intact until suitable housing and daytime facilities were in place.

[82]

***Some new Vancouver condos held empty for years: internal city memo***

**By Dan Fumano, *Vancouver Sun*, Aug. 30, 2023**

Some Vancouver developers have kept condos empty for as many as five years after completion and obtaining occupancy permits, internal city documents show. Relatively speaking, it's a small number of homes in the housing market: Of the 96 unsold Vancouver condos empty for most of 2022, 60 were completed that year and 36 completed between 2017 and 2021. But experts say

this new information, revealed in a memo obtained through FOI, adds to the public's understanding of the workings of Vancouver real estate. These documents show that a few developers have been willing to pay tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars in empty homes taxes every year to keep new condos empty for several years, while they wait for a buyer to meet their asking prices.

[83]

***Beleaguered by hundreds of heat wave deaths, John Horgan tries changing the channel to soccer***

**By Bob Mackin, *The Breaker*, July 13, 2021**

In March 2018, Deputy Tourism Minister Sandra Carroll reiterated the desire of B.C. and Crown stadium manager B.C. Pavilion Corporation to host 2026 World Cup matches, but not on terms dictated by FIFA, in a document obtained by theBreaker.news via FOI: “We agree, in principle, with many of the terms contained in the Stadium Agreement, we do have some concerns about the costs to British Columbia taxpayers. Certain key terms of the SA are so broad in scope that, based on our legal counsel advice, we believe that they may pose unacceptable risks to PavCo and its shareholder, the Province.”

[84]

***B.C. museum was warned origin of 'Indigenous' artifact was in doubt before announcing finding, documents show***

**By Todd Coyne, *CTV News*, Dec. 16, 2021**

Seventeen months after a mysterious stone carving was discovered at low tide on a Victoria beach, researchers at the Royal B.C. Museum and Archives are no closer to solving the question of its origin. Emails obtained by CTV News under FOI show the museum initially rushed to declare the stone a historic Indigenous artifact even as credible questions about the carving's authenticity were raised. The partially redacted documents show the museum was warned in the days after the discovery that the large stone pillar might actually be a modern creation and not an Indigenous artifact. But the warnings went unheeded for months as the museum pushed ahead with plans to display the stone as a relic of ancient Indigenous culture on southern Vancouver Island.

[85]

***Documents give inside look at how Vancouver car race veered off track***

**By Dan Fumano, *Vancouver Sun*, Aug. 27, 2022**

Long before Vancouver's planned Formula E car race this year was called off, city staff had internally identified plenty of potential red flags. For more than a year before the event's cancellation in April, several city departments were discussing unanswered questions and unusual challenges related to the ill-fated event, saying the organizers "continually failed or neglected to comply" with standard event permit requirements. Internal city hall communications, obtained by Postmedia News through FOI, highlighted several risks, challenges and concerns with the proposal from a new organization called One Stop Strategy Group. ///