

Canada's Use of Secret Evidence: Why should you care?

Accused does NOT mean guilty.

Anyone remember David Milgaard? How about Donald Marshall and Guy Paul Morin? Canada is not immune to charging and convicting the wrong person. Some innocent people sit in jail for decades before being exonerated. Refusing access to the evidence to an accused person and their lawyer seriously reduces the possibility of a fair trial. *Anyone can be accused. The burden of proof is on the accuser.*

The RCMP has already been shown to abuse its power.

Independent reports on police behaviour at APEC in Vancouver and Quebec City anti-FTAA demonstrations showed that police and the RCMP used brutal and unnecessary force against innocent civilians. Why expand their powers when they haven't demonstrated the ability to restrain undue use of their current powers?

The law is being used in racist targeting of Muslim and Arab people.

In a time of war, we must be especially cautious about any racist stereotyping against a perceived "enemy". Canadian history, especially the internment of Canadians of Japanese origin during WW2, shows how seriously we must take this issue. We must guard against repeating this terrible history.

"Terrorist" is a slur that can't be wiped off.

Accused individuals who are proved innocent may never recover their reputation. News stories about accused people and sensational charges are often bigger and more prominent than RCMP retractions. If an accused person is imprisoned for a long period of time, they are likely to lose their jobs, and experience problems in their family lives.

It's unconstitutional.

Many Canadian legal experts question the constitutionality of proceeding with trials without giving the accused or their lawyers access to the evidence used. Even if guilty, questions about the constitutionality of this law may weaken conviction and open convictions up to appeals.

It decreases our security.

Arbitrary convictions, misuse of police power, reducing civil liberties—these decrease our real security. They create fear of police and the justice system that undermines the validity of our justice system.

Sign VIPIRG's petition against the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act and the use of secret evidence in Canada.