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NEWS RELEASE

Canada needs new review process for anti-terrorism laws

Study finds national security laws lack independent expert review

Montreal – Parliament needs to develop an independent review system, similar to those in the United Kingdom and Australia, to scrutinize its anti-terrorism measures, according to a new study from the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

In the study, “Fixing the Deficiencies in Parliamentary Review of Anti-terrorism Law: Lessons from the United Kingdom and Australia,” author Craig Forcese argues that Canada’s *Anti-terrorism Act (ATA)* overreached, and adopted a definition of terrorist activity that was far broader than necessary.

“Anti-terrorism provisions are too radical to be left unscrutinized,” says Forcese, an associate professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa.

The British and Australian assessment procedures are superior to those employed by the Canadian government in its recent *ATA* review. Britain’s and Australia’s procedures should be used as models to create a precursor expert review system. “A credible, independent evaluator will be difficult to ignore, or to paint in a partisan light. One wonders how the carefully considered views of such an evaluator might have affected the disappointing and superficial parliamentary debates on preventive detention and investigative hearings in February 2007,” says Forcese.

Repeated annual or special reports by an independent reviewer could also militate against the gradual normalization of anti-terrorism laws and powers, reducing the prospect that these laws will fade from public consciousness and escape scrutiny in Canada’s statute books, Forcese notes.

“Fixing the Deficiencies in Parliamentary Review of Anti-terrorism Law: Lessons from the United Kingdom and Australia,” by Craig Forcese, can be downloaded free of charge from www.irpp.org

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