

For Immediate Release  
November 4, 2004

## AIDS group calls MAXIMUS deal “a betrayal”

VANCOUVER -- Calling it “a betrayal of thousands of HIV-positive British Columbians and a dangerous rejection of the considered advice of its own Privacy Commissioner,” British Columbia Persons With AIDS Society (BCPWA) Chairperson Paul Lewand today called on the government to cancel the contract it has signed with MAXIMUS Inc.

“The Health Minister’s contention that the contract announced today meets or exceeds the recent recommendations of the Privacy Commissioner is simply wrong,” said Lewand.

“The Privacy Commissioner himself, in his third recommendation, agreed with BCPWA’s April 23 suggestion to the Premier that no deal should go forward until written guarantees had been obtained from the appropriate US authorities to the effect that no attempt by any agent of the US government would be made to secure confidential BC citizens’ information otherwise placed within their grasp by the *USA PATRIOT Act*. This has not been done,” said Lewand.

“Bill 73 notwithstanding – for reasons that many have made clear and which we fully expect the Privacy Commissioner to echo in his upcoming comment on the Bill – British Columbians’ confidential health, income and other information is now at risk because of the MAXIMUS deal.

The deal covers the contracting out of all information management functions for the BC Medical Services Plan including Pharmacare.

“Regardless of all the plausible but ultimately empty safeguards trotted out by the Minister this afternoon in defense of the deal, the simple and inescapable fact of the matter remains that MAXIMUS BC is a wholly owned subsidiary of MAXIMUS Inc. Especially in the face of the decisive re-election of the George W. Bush Republicans and the consequent likely extension of the most offensive provisions of the *USA PATRIOT Act*, this deal places the personal medical records of every British Columbian within easy reach of the American FBI and, under the terms of the US *Homeland Security Act*, the entire array of US federal government agencies,” said Lewand.

He said the overwhelming majority of British Columbians with whom he had had contact – not just HIV-positive ones – were opposed to the deal because there simply weren’t sufficient safeguards in place.

“The deal is an abdication of the Government’s responsibility to the citizens it was elected to serve, and quite possibly constitutes a violation of the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act,” said Lewand.

- 30 -

Contact:

Lisa Gallo

Director of Communications

BC Persons With AIDS Society

P: 604.893.2209 C: 604.612.0222

[lisag@bcpwa.org](mailto:lisag@bcpwa.org)