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CLD Calls for Bold Improvements to Newfoundland Access Law

Yesterday, Michael Karanicolas testified on behalf of the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) before an independent panel reviewing Newfoundland and Labrador's Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA), presenting CLD's formal Submission to the review. Premier Marshall has stated that he wants an access law which would "rank among the best" internationally. CLD noted that this would require root and branch reform of the law, outlining the changes to ATIPPA that would be required if Newfoundland wishes to be a global leader in transparency.

"We appreciate having had the opportunity to provide inputs to the review panel," said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. "However, the real question is whether the panel and then government are prepared to move forward with the major reforms that would be required to implement Marshall's promises."

CLD's main recommendations are regarding needed reforms of the regime of exceptions, which is currently very overbroad, including by unnecessarily classifying enormous amounts of deliberative information. This problem is compounded by the fact that the Information and Privacy Commissioner lacks the power to review some of these exceptions. Other problems include the following:

- The Commissioner does not have binding order power and can only make recommendations.
- The absence of clear maximum timelines for responding to requests.
- Charging a fee simply for filing an access to information request, as well as for employee time spent responding to a request.

CLD's full Submission is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/cld-calls-for-bold-improvements-to-newfoundland-access-law/>.

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