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Bold Steps to Improve the Right to Information in Newfoundland and Labrador

In 2012, the government of Newfoundland and Labrador faced widespread criticism for legislation which significantly weakened provincial right to information (RTI) legislation. In a major about face, the government has committed to adopting a new RTI law which would dramatically improve the right to information system. The draft Bill under consideration was produced by a Review Committee tasked with considering improvements to the provincial Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA). CLD provided detailed written and oral comments to the Committee and many of the proposed reforms are in line with CLD's recommendations.

"The government said they wanted a strong RTI law by international standards and these reforms, if adopted, would deliver that and put Newfoundland and Labrador head and shoulders above other Canadian jurisdictions," said CLD Executive Director, Toby Mendel. *"We urge the government to adopt the proposals and show the rest of the country that serious reform in this area is not only possible but a democratic imperative."*

Newfoundland and Labrador's current RTI framework ranks 38th compared to national laws globally, when measured using the RTI Rating, a comparative assessment of RTI legislation from around the world. The reforms would bring the province's ranking up to 15th. British Columbia, the strongest province today, ranks 32nd, while Canada's federal law places a dismal 58th. Among the most important proposals are the elimination of requesting fees, a sharp reduction in fees for access, tighter timelines for responding to requests and a significantly expanded mandate and powers for the oversight body, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

CLD's full statement on the recommendations, as well as our analysis of the draft Bill using the RTI Rating, are available at: www.law-democracy.org/live/bold-steps-to-improve-the-right-to-information-in-newfoundland-and-labrador.

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