



31 August 2015 – for immediate release

Quebec: Access to Information Reform Proposals Only a Start

The government of Quebec has put forward a detailed set of proposals to reform its law on access to information and protection of personal data, in the form of the policy paper, *Orientations gouvernementales pour un gouvernement plus transparent, dans le respect du droit à la vie privée et la protection des renseignements personnels*. The Centre for Law and Democracy has prepared a submission outlining the further changes it believes are needed to bring Quebec's right to information law more fully into line with international standards in this area.

"The government's proposals are, for the most part, positive", said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *"But a far more ambitious set of reforms are needed to address the serious weaknesses of the current Quebec law."*

Some of the key recommendations in the CLD analysis are as follows:

- The law should apply to all information held or which can relatively easily be compiled by public bodies.
- Effective measures should be put in place to promote compliance by public bodies with the timelines in the law and the fees for providing information should be reduced.
- The regime of exceptions should be reviewed and amended to give proper effect to the proposal in Orientation No. 6, which calls for all exceptions to be strictly harm-based.
- The law should include a broad public interest override for all exceptions.
- Exceptions which are overbroad or unnecessary should be reviewed and repealed or amended.
- The oversight body, the Commission d'accès à l'information (CAI), should retain its current adjudicative function.

CLD urges the government of Quebec to revisit its proposals with a view to introducing more robust amendments to its right to information law.

The CLD analysis is available at: http://www.law-democracy.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Canada.Quebec.RTI_Aug15.pdf.

For further information, please contact:

Toby Mendel
Executive Director
Centre for Law and Democracy
Email: toby@law-democracy.org
+1 902 431-3688
www.law-democracy.org
twitter: @law_democracy