



## **Fix Canada's Broken Access to Information System**

*Coalition calls on parties to improve the public's right to know*

**HALIFAX** (Monday, 14 September 2015)—The undersigned organizations have issued a joint letter **[ADD URL TO OUR WEBSITE]** to the major political parties in Canada calling on them to make concrete commitments to reform Canada's access to information system.

A strong access to information system is vital to maintaining a healthy democracy. The public has the right to obtain the information it needs to participate meaningfully in the democratic process, while also holding Canada's public officials and Members of Parliaments accountable. The current system is failing Canadians.

"When the Access to Information Act was adopted over 30 years ago, Canada was a world leader on this important democratic right," said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of the Centre for Law and Democracy. "But decades of stagnation have left us in a miserable 59<sup>th</sup> position globally, far behind countries like India, Mexico, South Africa and Slovenia."

"Canadians are being left in the dark," said Tom Henheffer, Executive Director of Canadian Journalists for Free Expression. "We have a right to know in this country and it's being undermined. Urgent access to information reform is needed to hold politicians and public institutions accountable, to keep the public informed and to ensure Canadian democracy continues to function."

"It is long past time these changes were made," said Vincent Gogolek, Executive Director of Freedom of Information and Privacy Association. "The black holes in the Access to Information Act have to be closed."

**Our country deserves an open and accountable government.** Political parties must make a clear electoral promise to undertake a comprehensive process of consultation leading to reform of the Access to Information Act. They must also express specific support for the rapid adoption of the following four reforms following the election:

1. **Strengthen the Office of the Information Commissioner with a larger mandate and order-making power.**
2. **Eliminate loopholes and blanket exclusions and minimize exceptions to the Access to Information Act.**
3. **Expand the scope of the Act to include all public authorities and other bodies which perform a public function or receive significant public funding.**
4. **Require public officials to document and preserve all records of their decision-making.**



### How can Canadians help reform Canada's access to information system?

- **Send an email to your representatives:** using the following simple [one-click platform](#), you can easily make your right to information a priority to federal party leaders and your local MPs and senators based on your postal code.
- **Share your views on social media:** tweet at Secretary of the Treasury Board [@TonyclementCPC](#), Liberal Open Government Critic [@Scott\\_Simms](#) and NDP Treasury Board Critic [@MRavignat](#) using **#ATIreform** and **#cdnfoi** to let them know that you want to see immediate reforms to Canada's access to information system.

### Signatories:

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA)  
Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ)  
Canadian Media Guild/CWA Canada  
Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE)  
Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF)  
Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD)  
Centre for Social Justice  
Evidence for Democracy  
Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ)  
Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (FIPA)  
Greenpeace Canada  
International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group  
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada  
PEN Canada  
Politics of Evidence Working Group  
Newspapers Canada  
Open Media  
Our Right to Know  
Right to Know Coalition of Nova Scotia  
Voices-Voix  
Association des Journalistes Indépendants du Québec  
World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)

**Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD)** works around the world to promote, protect and develop those human rights which serve as the foundation for or underpin democracy, including the rights to freedom of expression, to vote and participate in governance, to access information and to freedom of assembly and association. [www.law-democracy.org](http://www.law-democracy.org)

**Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE)** monitors, defends and reports on free expression and access to information in Canada and abroad. Rooted in the field of journalism, CJFE promotes a free media

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as essential to a fair and open society. CJFE boldly champions the free expression rights of all people, and encourages and supports individuals and groups in the protection of their own and others' free expression rights. [cjfe.org](http://cjfe.org)

**The Canadian Association of Journalists** is a professional organization with more than 600 members across Canada. The CAJ's primary roles are public-interest advocacy work and professional development for its members.

**The Canadian Taxpayers Federation** is Canada's leading non-partisan citizens' advocacy group fighting for lower taxes, less waste and accountable government. Founded in 1990, the CTF has more than 84,000 supporters and seven offices across Canada. The CTF is funded by free-will, non tax-receiptable contributions.

**Newspapers Canada** is the voice of Canada's newspapers, representing over 800 daily, weekly and community newspapers. One of the association's missions is to advance the cause of freedom of expression in Canada generally and to advocate the right to freedom of expression of individuals, including freedom of the press and other media of communication and the right of people to have a press free from governmental control or restraint

**Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (FIPA)** is a non-partisan, non-profit society established in 1991 to promote and defend freedom of information and privacy rights in Canada.

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