



2 April 2013: Halifax

Canada: Serious Problems in Quebec's Openness Law

Given the steady stream of corruption and mismanagement allegations that have emanated from the province in recent months, it is hardly revelatory to suggest that Quebec has a problem with transparency. A Submission released today by Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) spells out in the detail the nature of these problems, and how Quebec's legal framework for access to information needs to be changed to bring it into line with international standards in this area.

The Submission identifies a litany of deficiencies, including overly broad exceptions, the limited scope of the law, routine breaches of timelines and overcharging of requesters. It also notes that several public authorities, including ministers' offices, municipalities and members of the National Assembly, are under no firm obligation to disclose any information, instead having the discretion to release information only when they feel this would be expedient.

"Previous studies carried out by CLD have found significant problems in every jurisdiction in Canada," said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *"But even in this weak peer group Quebec is noticeably deficient. We urge the Government of Quebec to seize this opportunity to take action to put a stop to the culture of secrecy and the harm it engenders."*

The Submission was prepared for a general consultation and public hearing being held by the Province of Quebec's Committee on Institutions that is meant to address, among other issues, the implementation of Quebec's Act Respecting Access to Documents Held by Public Bodies and the Protection of Personal Information.

The Submission is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/canada-serious-problems-in-quebecs-openness-law/>.

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