

Open Letter to Federal, Provincial and Territorial Information Commissioners

By email

13 May 2021

Dear Federal, Provincial and Territorial Information Commissioners:

We, the undersigned organisations, write to you today as members of the Right to Information Alliance Canada, a collection of Canadian groups committed to promoting a strong and free flow of government information to the public.

As most of you will be aware, the Grace-Pépin Access to Information Award, which was given out from 2011 to 2017 inclusive, went to honour an individual or organisation who had made a “significant contribution to the promotion of access to information” in Canada. Starting in 2018, this was replaced by the Information Commissioner’s Award, which recognises a “person and/or an access to information team in an institution subject to the [Access to Information] Act for excellence” in a number of areas.

We believe that it is important to celebrate all sorts of contributions to the success of the right to information in Canada, whether this is from individuals and organisations that are subject to access to information legislation or from those who work in other ways to this end. We are thus writing to you today to urge you, working as a collective group, to restore either the Grace-Pépin Access to Information Award or something along those lines which has a broader remit than the Information Commissioner’s Award, most specifically in terms of the range of individuals and organisations covered (i.e. not just those subject to legal access to information obligations) but perhaps also in terms of the level of access to information to which contributions are recognised (i.e. not just at the federal level).

Such an award could exist alongside the Information Commissioner’s Award, but we believe that it is preferable for this to come from yourselves as official mandate holders rather than, for example, civil society organisations.

We would be happy to discuss this issue further with you all and, indeed, to support you in the development of an award if you do go ahead with it.

Yours sincerely,

Meghan McDermott
Senior Staff Counsel
BC Civil Liberties Association

Jason Woywada, Executive Director
Mike Larsen, President
BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association

Kevin Walby
Associate Professor-Criminal Justice
Centre for Access to Information and Justice

James L. Turk
Director
Centre for Free Expression, Ryerson University

Toby Mendel
Executive Director
Centre for Law and Democracy

Michael Hurley
President
Ontario Council of Hospital Unions-CUPE

Shawn McCarthy, President
Dean Beeby, Board Member
World Press Freedom Canada