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Canada: Submission on British Columbia Right to Information Law

The Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) has made a Submission to the British Columbia (BC) all-party Special Committee to Review the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), the local right to information law. This follows an appearance before the Committee by CLD Executive Director, Toby Mendel, on 16 March 2022. Although relatively strong by Canadian standards, the BC law was weakened by amendments which were rushed through in late 2021 and, internationally, would rank in 50th place from among the 135 national laws assessed on the RTI Rating.

"People across Canada were shocked when the BC government rushed through negative amendments to FIPPA last year, at a time when the all-party Special Committee had already started its review of the Act" said Toby Mendel, CLD's Executive Director. *"The Committee now has the opportunity to redress that democratic backsliding by making strong recommendations to improve the Act."*

The CLD Submission makes a number of recommendations of which some of the more important are:
- The Committee should make clear its rejection of both the process and substance of the 2021 amendments.
- The scope of FIPPA should be increased substantially to cover all three branches of government and all bodies which are owned, controlled or substantially funded by government or which undertake public functions.
- There should be overall limits to the extensions to the time for responding to requests and no fees should be payable for making requests or time spent to respond to requests.
- The exceptions should be comprehensively reviewed and any that do not protect legitimate interests or include a harm test should be repealed or amended.

CLD's Submission is available here.

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