

SURVEY RESPONSE
CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Organization: Right to Information Alliance Canada
Date: September 8th, 2021

Agnes Holmes
Right to Information Alliance Canada
Via email, agnes.holmes@ryerson.ca

Dear Ms. Holmes,

Thank you for your August 27 letter about promoting the strong and free flow of government information to the public. Canada's Conservatives understand the importance of the *Access to Information Act* and are committed to making the federal government more transparent. Despite entering office with promises of transparency, the Liberal government has used all the tools at its disposal to prevent Canadians from learning the truth about scandals like SNC-Lavalin. Canadians have the right to know what their government is up to.

Canada's Conservatives will amend the *Canada Evidence Act* to ensure that cabinet confidence can no longer be used to shield government insiders from criminal investigation. The amendments will introduce the following measures:

- Where the government does not want to turn over information or allow the police to interview an official, cabinet confidence would need to be asserted in writing by the Clerk of the Privy Council with an explanation of the reasons that the government believes cabinet confidence applies.
- The RCMP would then be able to apply to the Federal Court to access information protected by cabinet confidence.
 - The information will be provided to the RCMP if there is a reasonable basis to believe an offence has been committed and that the information is relevant to the investigation.
- This new application mechanism would set a high bar to protect the principle of cabinet confidence and to ensure that genuine cabinet deliberations are protected. Cabinet confidence is meant to ensure good government, not shield illegal behaviour. These measures will safeguard our democracy against the whims of unscrupulous politicians.

Furthermore, Canada's Conservatives will move to fix Access to Information by giving the Commissioner of Information the power to make orders to departments to release information promptly, to bring an end to the current government's practice of endless delays that makes a mockery of the law. We will prohibit the application of non-disclosure agreements in circumstances where an individual is disclosing information to a lawful authority or seeking medical assistance or legal advice. This would apply across all federally regulated enterprises as well as the government.

Currently, the government can also effectively hide information by burying it in papers. We will mandate that government departments, Crown Corporations, and those receiving public funds publish more data in machine-readable formats using prevailing open standards.

We will further strengthen whistleblower protection by creating a strong federal legislative framework that will enable workers to speak up about wrongdoing without fear of reprisal.

Canada's Conservatives are committed to making the federal government more transparent. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Erin O'Toole
Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada