



Whistleblowing Canada Research Society

- Research, Education & Advocacy

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New group launches and calls on government to protect whistleblowers.

-Lack of protection harms the innocent and helps corrupt wrongdoers.

Roberts Creek (Near Vancouver), British Columbia. Canada's government has violated its own weak, ineffective whistleblower protection law by not fulfilling its obligation to promptly table recommended improvements in both houses of Parliament. This failure ensures public servants continue to be controlled, suppressed and confounded should they wish to disclose the truth for the public good. Citizens are paying a heavy price especially in this COVID-19 era.

That is one of the reasons why the Whistleblowing Canada Research Society was formed and is officially launching today. This new national organization is committed to comprehensively addressing the long-standing problems plaguing whistleblowers, now so clearly illuminated by the pandemic and the WE scandal.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgency of dealing with this situation as never before in our history. Worker safety concerns within the public service, and in federally regulated industries as well as the potential for fraud in government emergency programs warrant enhanced protection for whistleblowers,” said Pamela Forward, president of Whistleblowing Canada.

“A tragic witness to the need for reform of whistleblower laws provincially is the harms - including deaths - that have occurred to those in long-term care homes and food processing plants. Some who came forward with concerns about COVID-19 risks in these workplaces were fired, prompting those who might have come forward to remain silent.”

Forward noted the federal finance committee investigating the WE scandal recently needed to offer witness immunity protection to individuals employed by the controversial charity – something that wouldn't be necessary if there was a workable federal whistleblower protection law.

“To do nothing encourages wrongdoing and is equivalent to accepting corruption, fraud and regulatory failure as the norm in our public and private organizations.”

The organization is calling on the President of the Treasury Board, Jean-Yves Duclos, the minister responsible for overseeing the functioning of the federal public sector internal disclosure process, to lead the way, by acting immediately to fulfill the government's statutory obligations under Canada's federal whistleblower law.

Those obligations include the prompt tabling in Parliament of a legally mandated five-year review of that law which was produced by a parliamentary committee in 2017 but never presented. The result is the intent of the Act - to ensure ongoing improvements in the law - has been thwarted. The recommended improvements were never implemented and whistleblowers remain at risk.

Further legislative reform should ensure Canada's whistleblowing law encompasses international best practices for such legislation, as well as default access to important documents held by public servants in trust for Canadians.

Concurrently, political and organizational culture reform, another of the minister's responsibilities, should take place under the minister's leadership, since legislative reform will be unsuccessful without it.

Further, Whistleblowing Canada has written a letter of introduction to Minister Duclos asking him to support and champion the establishment of a Standing Parliamentary Joint Committee on Whistleblowing to provide oversight for the implementation of the needed legislative, process and culture reform. The group has also written to the leaders of the Opposition parties and the Senate asking for their support.

The organization has begun its work by creating a network of practitioners and experts in the whistleblowing field nationally and internationally, as represented on their board and advisory board. Other projects include webinars on vital topics and a conference on "Improving Whistleblowing Practices and Research in Canada" set for the spring of 2021 - a first for this country.

Biographies of members of the Board and Advisory Board are available at:

https://www.whistleblowingcanada.com/board_of_directors

A copy of the letters to Minister Duclos, the Opposition leaders, and Senate leaders is available at:

https://www.whistleblowingcanada.com/press_releases

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Whistleblowing Canada Research Society (WC) is a non-profit corporation (pending charitable registration) dedicated to advancing education on the whistleblowing phenomenon in Canada through research. This research is shared publicly to inform public discussion and public policy development.

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