



OFFICE OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION • LIBERAL CAUCUS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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July 22, 1998

Mr. Daryl Evans
BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Assn.
103 - 2092 West 2nd Avenue
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6J 1Z3

Dear Mr. Evans:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for The Campaign for Open Government.

Open government is the hallmark of a free and democratic societies.

Access to government information helps us, as the Official Opposition, and others hold the government to account, and accountability enhances democracy. When government does its business behind closed doors, people will invariably believe that government has something to hide. Secrecy feeds distrust and dishonesty. Openness builds trust and integrity.

But FOI is not just a tool of Opposition. The fundamental principle must be this: government information belongs to the people, not to government. This means, among other things, that all citizens must have timely, effective and affordable access to the documents which governments make and keep. Governments should facilitate access, not obstruct it.

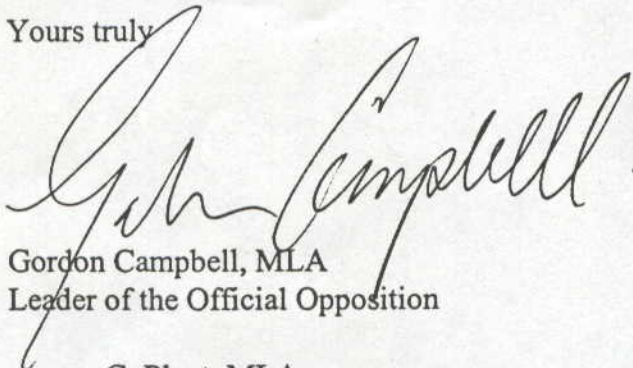
Moreover, information rights are meaningless if disclosure timetables cannot be met because there aren't enough staff to do the job, or if fees become an obstacle to access.

With these principles in mind I am writing to assure the members of the Campaign for Open Government that the BC Liberal caucus is strongly committed to:

- maintaining and enhancing the rights and protections enshrined in BC's Freedom of Information and Privacy Act;
- ensuring that resources are available so that all provincial government public bodies are able to meet or beat statutory disclosure timetables, and;
- ensuring that no search or photocopy fees are charged to any citizen requesting copies of their personal records.

Regrettably, the NDP have abandoned their commitment to open government. Expenditure cuts, the threat of fee increases, and the excessive reliance on FOI as the only way of obtaining routine government documents are all evidence of a government which prefers the practice of concealment to the culture of openness. This is unacceptable. We have spoken out against these NDP policies. We will continue to speak out. I applaud your vigilance in protecting open government in British Columbia and I look forward to any opportunity that I or my caucus members may have to work with you in this worthwhile cause.

Yours truly



Gordon Campbell, MLA
Leader of the Official Opposition

cc: G. Plant, MLA
Attorney General Critic