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Transparency groups urge Commons inquiry into RCMP dropping *Access to Info Act* investigation 'Ministerial aides should not be above the law'

Ottawa/Toronto/Vancouver – The BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and Newspapers Canada are urging the House Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics (ETHI) to hold hearings into an abrupt RCMP decision to drop its criminal investigation into a federal Conservative staffer who deliberately blocked the release of documents requested under the *Access to Information Act*.

“The RCMP gave no reason for dropping this criminal investigation into the Togneri affair beyond a one-line statement saying it was unwarranted,” said FIPA Executive Director Vincent Gogolek. “This is very disturbing given the Information Commissioner’s report on the same incident.”

The federal Information Commissioner found that Sebastien Togneri, an aide to former Public Works minister Christian Paradis, had interfered with a reporter’s request for access to a record when he directed ATIP staff to ‘unrelease’ the disclosure package.

“His interference resulted in the non-disclosure of the entire record for a period of time...thereby denying the requester’s right of access to information under the Act,” the Commissioner stated. http://www.oic-ci.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr_spe-rep_rap-spe_rep-car_fic-ren_2010-2011_interference-with-ati-interference-avec-ati.aspx

“If they can’t charge someone in a minister’s office who has been found by the Information Commissioner to have sent an e-mail telling officials to ‘unrelease’ documents for no reason, when would anyone ever be charged?” asked CTF Communications Director Scott Hennig. “Canadians need to know if this is the case, and the Commons committee on ATI, Ethics and Privacy should hold hearings into this critical situation.”

“The RCMP decision to abandon this investigation is extremely troubling,” added Newspaper Canada head John Hinds. “It appears to leave the people most likely to interfere with ATI requests above the law, and that just cannot stand.”

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Joint letter to Chair of ETHI Committee is [HERE](#)

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