

Submission to the Statutory Review Committee on *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*

July 24, 2014 (5:05 PM)

An e-mail from Mr. Frank Murphy to the ATIPPA Review Committee

Subject: Comments regarding Bill 29 and government 'secrecy' in general

Members of the Review Committee:

In a democracy, all citizens are eligible to participate in the process of governing. Since this is not practical, by means of elections, citizens choose from among their own members, individuals to represent them; these elected members do the actual governing. However, since ALL citizens have the right to govern, then all citizens should have the right to access any and all information produced during the governing process. Why should such information suddenly become privileged, able to be accessed by the few chosen by election?

Those people elected by the general citizenry become, in effect, employees of the citizens. Through our taxes, we pay the members' salaries; we pay for the office and the office workers used by each member; we pay for whatever it is that the member does in his role as member whether it is building a new road or bridge, authorizing purchase of an expensive piece of medical equipment, or traveling on behalf of the province to establish trade or other business with another jurisdiction. Surely, then, citizens have the right to examine every expense to determine whether their money is being used efficiently and efficaciously.

As for privacy - the oft-stated reason for not providing certain kinds of information - privacy is important, and valuable. However, to cite privacy to withhold salary information of government employees, or the cost of establishing a new department, or the cost of any aspect of government programs, seems as inappropriate as the owner of a business not knowing what he pays his own employees. Again, I mention the obvious: government operates by using money obtained from its citizens; citizens should have the right to see how the government is using this money. "Transparency" and "openness" are words often used by aspirants to government; sadly, all too often we end up with a closed opacity.

(Today, even Confederation Building itself is shrouded in a veil of secrecy. :-) )

Thank you, Committee Members, for at least reading this letter; I like to think it represents the thoughts of most of our citizens.

Sincerely

Frank Murphy