

NEWS RELEASE

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RCMP decision to drop investigation into violation of *Access to Info Act* ‘potentially catastrophic’ says FIPA

Government staffers apparently above the law

Vancouver – A federal Conservative staffer who deliberately blocked the release of documents requested under the *Access to Information Act* will get away scot free after the RCMP decided to drop its investigation into the incident. He was facing the possibility of up to two years in jail and a \$10,000 fine.

“This decision defies reason, and if it is allowed to stand, it means that political staff can interfere with our legislated right to government documents with impunity,” said FIPA Executive Director Vincent Gogolek.

“If the problem is with the *Access to Information Act*, then the government should amend it immediately to include ministerial offices and staff,” he stated. “At minimum, the Commons committee on ATI, Ethics and Privacy should hold hearings into this critical situation.”

The federal Information Commissioner had already investigated the actions of Sebastien Tognieri, an aide to former Public Works minister Christian Paradis, and found that he had interfered with a Canadian Press 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](#).

The RCMP’s extremely brief statement, giving no substantive reason for dropping the investigation, which began in March, was, “It was determined that a criminal investigation into this matter was unwarranted.”

“The RCMP decision to abandon this investigation is extremely troubling,” Gogolek said. “If they can’t charge someone in a minister’s office who has been found by the Information Commissioner to have sent an email telling officials to “unrelease” documents for no reason, when would anyone ever be charged?”

-30-

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