

NEWS RELEASE

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BC government ordered to release \$300 million outsourcing contract

Time to stop litigating and start posting routinely, says FIPA

Vancouver – The BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (FIPA) has won another important victory in forcing the provincial government to release contracts it makes with the private sector.

In a decision handed down yesterday (<http://www.oipc.bc.ca/orders/2011/OrderF11-14.pdf>), the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner ordered the government to hand over most of the remaining parts of the HP Advanced Services Master Services Agreement. The government had already been forced to release the bulk of the contract by an earlier Order from the Commissioner. FIPA made its original FOI request in 2004.

“The BC government should accept the inevitable and start posting these contracts on line routinely,” said FIPA Executive Director Vincent Gogolek. “We have asked both Minister of Open Government Stephanie Cadieux and her predecessor to do this, but nothing has happened to date except endless litigation at the taxpayers’ expense.”

The HPAS contract is worth \$301 million, and the government’s nine Alternative Service Delivery contracts together are worth \$1.8 billion of taxpayers’ money. FIPA has already forced the government to release the Maximus and IBM contracts (although the government is appealing the Order to release the IBM contract).

The BC government argued that releasing the remaining parts of the contract would result in damage to the security of the government’s security systems; that it would damage the economic interests of BC; and that it would harm the interests of a third party (HPAS). The Adjudicator rejected all these claims except for small sections related to certain technical specifications of the system.

The HPAS Order is the latest in a series of decisions by the Information and Privacy Commissioner’s office which require government and other public bodies to release the terms of concluded contracts.

“The Premier has talked a lot about Open Government, and posting these contracts on line would be an indication that she really is serious about reversing the Gordon Campbell way of doing things,” said Gogolek. “The public has a right to know, and the government has run out of excuses for not releasing this information.”