

## **QUESTIONS FOR PARTY LEADERS ON FREEDOM AND INFORMATION AND PRIVACY ISSUES**

*The BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association  
would appreciate receiving your views on the following questions.  
Please do not be restricted by the format; feel free to elaborate on any point.*

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### **If or when your party forms the next B.C. government:**

1. Do you think that access to government information should be increased? If so, what measures will you take to make it more accessible?
  
2. What specific reforms or amendments would you like to make to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOI/PA)?
  
3. Since 1998, both NDP and Liberal administrations have drastically cut funding for administration and oversight of the FOI/PA act. Most recently, the budget of the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office was slashed by 35%, seriously reducing its effectiveness. When elected, what approach will you take to funding the FOI process? For example, will you restore FOI budgets that have been cut?
  
4. When the FOI/PA act was passed, it was often stated that "fees will not be a barrier to access." Today, many FOI applicants find fee estimates to be higher than ever – in fact, a major barrier. Do you think fees are a problem, and will you advocate more cost recovery for FOI or less?
  
5. Do you think there should be a fee for access to one's own personal information?
  
6. In his annual reports, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has repeatedly indicated that the foremost problem in the FOI process is excessive delay in responding to requests. Do you think action should be taken to reduce delay in responding to FOI requests?

7. Do you think the FOIPP Act should be extended to quasi-governmental bodies that are currently exempt, such as the new BC Ferries Corporation and the 2010 Olympic Games Organizing Committee?
  
8. In 1996 the NDP administration changed the FOI Request Tracking System (RTS), so that it now rates requests by political “sensitivity.” Since then, requests labeled “sensitive” are delayed significantly and the names of applicants are passed on to officials outside of the FOI branches. Do you approve of this practice, and if not, will you take steps to eliminate it?
  
9. Following the tainted blood scandal, Ottawa passed a law to penalize the improper shredding and alteration of records by officials in the federal government. Will you advocate the same for the provincial government?
  
10. A senior BC Government official recently stated publicly that “I delete my email as fast as I can.” This highlighted a harmful trend toward a more “oral” style of government, where as little as possible is written down in order to avoid FOI requests. What is your position on such practices? Do you advocate any specific remedies to ensure the creation and preservation of public records?
  
11. Do you think the Legislature itself (eg. Clerks and MLAs’ offices) should be covered by the FOIPP Act? As well, will you implement recommendation 17 of the Special Committee that reviewed the FOIPPA, which is to extend the definition of officers of the legislature to include, for example the police complaints commissioner and the child and youth advocate?

Please contact / send your response to:  
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*“We will bring in the most open and accountable government in Canada. I know some people say we’ll soon forget about that, but I promise that we won’t!”*

— Premier Gordon Campbell, victory night speech, 2001

*“It’s your information – the citizens’ information. It’s not our information...”*

— Former B.C. Premier Mike Harcourt, October, 1991