



# A look back at 2017



BC FREEDOM OF INFORMATION  
AND PRIVACY ASSOCIATION

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2017

## ANNUAL REPORT

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# 2017 Annual Report

## Funders

The BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association thanks the Law Foundation of BC and all our other donors, funders, and contributors for their ongoing support of our advocacy, research, programs, and services.

We also acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia (Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch).



BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement  
Branch of the Ministry of Public  
Safety and Solicitor General

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<b>President:</b>	<b>Mike Larsen</b> , Faculty, Criminology Department, Kwantlen University
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	<b>Keith Reynolds</b> , National Research Representative, Canadian Union of Public Employees
	<b>Paul Holden</b> , Software Developer
	<b>James Symons</b> , President and CEO, Power Diagnostic Technologies Ltd.

## Staff

**Sara Neuert**, Executive Director  
**Joyce Yan**, Program Director

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# Message from the President



**Dear members, allies,  
and partners,**

This has been an exciting year for FIPA, and a busy one. In addition to our usual work - responding to public requests for assistance, organizing public education events, conducting research and making policy submissions, providing media commentary, and actively advocating for information and privacy rights - we celebrated the retirement of Vincent Gogolek and welcomed a new Executive Director,

Sara Neuert. Successfully navigating this time of change required an 'all hands on deck' commitment from staff and our Board of Directors, and it was inspiring to see everyone rise to the occasion.

## **Engaging with Current Information and Privacy Issues**

This was a year that saw increased public and political attention paid to issues that FIPA and its allies have long been engaged with. For example, the revelations regarding Facebook, Cambridge Analytica, and AggregatIQ led to heightened concerns regarding digital privacy and social media. FIPA actively participated in media conversations about digital democracy and the pervasiveness of online surveillance, and we look forward to revisiting these issues in a more focused way over the coming year, especially in the lead-up to the release of investigative reports from UK and Canadian Information and Privacy Commissioners.

Recent debates in the privacy field have also been shaped by the implementation of the European Union's *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)*, which has introduced a number of important privacy-by-design and informed consent principles that apply to entities collecting, storing, and using personal data. The global ripple effects of the GDPR are ongoing, and our advocacy work on privacy issues over the next year will definitely include efforts to bring BC and Canadian

privacy legislation in line with new international standards. While the GDPR is by no means a panacea for privacy, it contains a number of provisions that we would do well to emulate.

Continuing the theme of intersections of privacy rights and digital technology, we have received numerous requests for advice and commentary on developments related to the Internet of Things, including Smart Cities and Connected Car initiatives. In the context of educational institutions, we have been following the widespread introduction of Google Education suites and other learning management technologies that have serious privacy implications. A common theme uniting these issues is the adoption and implementation of privacy-impacting technologies without adequate proactive privacy protections. This points to a need for focused advocacy and public education, and also for efforts to maintain and expand legislative privacy protections (for example, the FIPPA provisions for domestic data storage).

On the Freedom of Information front, 2017 saw a new BC Premier enter office following a campaign that featured a number of specific commitments to enhanced transparency and FOI reform. The provincial government conducted public consultations on FOI in Spring 2018, and FIPA submitted a set of recommendations that was consistent with our submission to the 2015 statutory review of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)* by the provincial legislature. We also participated in an invitational consultation on FOI user experience. In early 2018, we coordinated an open letter, co-signed by allies and partners, calling for FOI reform. The FIPPA is overdue for an overhaul on many fronts. Polling commissioned by FIPA shows that there is a clear public mandate for the introduction of, *inter alia*, a robust duty to document and penalties associated with deliberate efforts to interfere with information rights. The legislature broke for the summer without introducing a FIPPA reform bill, and we will be redoubling our advocacy in this area in the Fall.

## **Public education**

It has been my privilege to act as the facilitator for FIPA's series of 'FOI 101' workshops over the past several years.

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# Message from the President

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This year, we took a number of important steps to expand our FOI education initiatives. In addition to holding workshops for the general public, we provided a number of targeted FOI 101 workshops for specific organizations, including the BC Teachers' Federation and the BC Federation of Labour. These workshops allowed us to deliver general information rights education alongside content and Q&A sessions focused on the needs of specific audiences. We also collaborated with Courthouse Libraries BC on our first real-time FOI 101 Webinar, which allowed us to provide a workshop to a diverse and distributed online audience, and to respond to questions as they arose. We look forward to continuing to provide tailored FOI 101 workshops over the next year, and to deliver additional webinars. Feedback on these initiatives has been excellent, and we are currently working on refining and updating our training materials and planning for advanced 'FOI 201' sessions that will deal with common challenges and troubleshooting.

## FIPA Governance

During last year's AGM, our long-serving and distinguished Executive Director Vincent Gogolek announced his pending retirement to the FIPA membership. The Board of Directors had ample notice of this plan, and we entered the last year with the understanding that succession planning, the executive search process, and providing support for our new Executive Director would be our primary governance tasks. A committee of Directors, supported by Vince, conducted a search in the Fall of 2017. We received applications from a diverse group of candidates. The committee conducted interviews, spoke to references, and eventually made a recommendation which was supported by the Board. We were pleased to offer the position of Executive Director to Sara Neuert, who brings to FIPA an extensive background in community advocacy, conflict resolution, executive management, fundraising, and government. Our transition plan included an invaluable month of overlap between our outgoing and incoming Executive Directors prior to Vince's retirement. Our new Executive Director also benefitted from the institutional memory and knowledge of our Program Director, Joyce Yan, and from the expertise and experience of Board members. From the outset, we committed to continuing to deliver in FIPA's core programming, research, and advocacy areas, while also taking advantage of new ideas and new leadership.

The last year saw FIPA receive a significant increase in our operating grant from the Law Foundation. We received news of this generous increase towards the end of 2017, midway through our ED search process. This placed us in the interesting position of welcoming a new Executive Director while also planning to make the most of the opportunities that arise from our expanded resources. After discussing our options for adjusting our budget and plans, the Board decided to allocate additional towards an increase in our Staff salaries, bringing them closer to current standards in the BC nonprofit community. The long-term sustainability of FIPA depends, in part, on our ability to attract and retain excellent personnel.

The Board has also committed to continuing to develop policies and procedures that will provide us with the kind of organizational structure that facilitates sustainability. This will be a priority for the Directors over the next several months. Additionally, we will be seeking to grow the Board of Directors with a view to increasing the diversity of voices, perspectives, and backgrounds around the table at our meetings.

In summation, this has been a busy year on the governance front! We have responded well to important changes, and FIPA is a stable, committed, active, and growing organization. Our team is small, dedicated and passionate, and we are supported by an extraordinary membership, generous funders, and by a web of partners and allies working to protect and advance information and privacy rights. On behalf of the Board, I thank you all for your continued support and energy.

Sincerely,



Mike Larsen  
President, BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association

# Message from the Executive Director

**To our valued members, partners, friends, and allies:**

2017 marked a year of change. We have a new provincial government in British Columbia for the first time since 2001, we have a new Information Commissioner of Canada and a new commissioner in the Office of Information & Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia. FIPA's own long standing Executive Director, Vincent Gogolek, retired in early 2018.

In February of 2017, Vincent Gogolek, on behalf of FIPA, testified before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy & Ethics during their review and possible reform of the *Personal Information and Protection of Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)*, the federal legislation that governs how the private sector collects, uses and discloses personal information.

In addition to the testimony, FIPA provided a written submission on recommendations to the Act.

FIPA worked throughout the spring of 2017 to keep the issues on Freedom of Information (FOI) and privacy in the public eye. In the context of the Provincial election, FIPA worked to get firm on-the-record commitments on important FOI and privacy issues from the major parties. We continue to remind all parties of these commitments in our efforts to advance information and privacy rights in BC.

Vincent Gogolek, along with lawyer Philippa Lawson, who, was the lead researcher on our ground-breaking report *The Connected Car*, testified before the Senate Standing Committee on Transportation and Communications on FIPA's published findings. This project illustrated the need for law reform to protect Canadians in areas of privacy, cybersecurity and safety relating to connected cars. Our study, the first of its kind, has been cited by numerous government bodies and legislative committees, both within Canada and internationally. FIPA is currently working on an update to *The Connected Car* that tracks developments since the publication of our original report.

In September 2017, former Information Commissioner of Canada Suzanne Legault issued a special report detailing the regressive nature of Bill C-58. On National Right to Know day, FIPA along with many others went on record setting out some of Bill C-58's many shortcomings and demanding the withdrawal of

the bill.

September also saw FIPA host the 2017 Information Summit conference. Our panels and keynote addresses covered the present state and future prospects for information rights, the tensions between claims to legal privilege and the right to know, the prospects for provincial whistleblower legislation, and information rights in Indigenous communities.

Finally, Vincent Gogolek marked his final day with FIPA (with a career spanning ten years) on a high note with the successful launch of a joint letter calling for the Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia, to reform the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The letter set out a number of priority areas for law reform and referenced FIPA's survey of election commitments from political parties and our commissioned poll on British Columbians' views on FOI reform.

As I begin my new post as BC FIPA's Executive Director, I would like to extend my heartfelt "thank you" to Vincent Gogolek for his incredible advice, support and mentorship during our time of transition. I would also like to thank the Board for giving me this extraordinary opportunity to lead such a unique, rights-based organization.

We will continue to help British Columbians with their FOI and privacy challenges online through the website, over the phone, and in person.

We look forward to continuing in 2018 with work on FOI reform, both federally and provincially; playing an active role in the provincial public consultation on *FIPPA*; conducting research on best practices for whistleblower legislation; continuing to organize public education events; and organizing and hosting the 2018 Information Summit coming in September.

Sincerely,



Sara Neuert  
Executive Director, BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association

# Our work

**The BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association is** a non-partisan, non-profit society that was established in 1991 to promote and defend freedom of information and privacy rights in Canada.

Our goal is to empower citizens by increasing their access to public information and their control over their own personal information. We serve a wide variety of individuals and organizations through programs of public education, public assistance, research, and law reform.

FIPA was founded as part of an effort to establish access to information and privacy legislation in BC. Our organization was the prime non-governmental force behind the passage of BC's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)*. In the quarter century since, FIPA has worked tirelessly to defend and expand the reach of the *FIPPA* and to protect the information rights of British Columbians.

With a diverse, intergenerational membership of over 250 individuals and organizations, FIPA is a cornerstone of BC's civil society. Our two staff members focus on maintaining a dynamic core group of activities, including:

- Public assistance and referrals
- Public legal education
- Public interest advocacy and legal research
- Litigation and law reform

We have fought for the public disclosure of government contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars. We have convened dialogues, conferences, workshops, and celebrations dedicated to establishing a democratic balance of power between the institutions, the citizens, and the officials who make up our society. Most importantly, we have helped countless citizens, in one-on-one conversation, understand and act on their fundamental information rights.



# By the numbers

In 2014, we began the process of transitioning from an inaccurate analytics system to a more accurate one. Starting in 2015, the number of website hits, website visits and help topic hits appear to have decreased sharply but in actuality, this is a reflection in the change of systems. The table below includes figures from the new analytics systems. The changes are either noted in the table or as a footnote. We successfully migrated to the new system by the end of 2017.

## People served

	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Helplines</b>	236	226	173	161
<b>Legal Assistance</b>	22	160	152	151
<b>Website Visits</b>	4,954*	14,756	20,831	17,269
<b>Pageviews</b>	8,921*	25,552	26,939	23,071
<b>Help Topic Hits</b>	754*	6,812	13,108	12,074
<b>Media Interviews</b>	120	135	73	93
<b>FIPA Event Attendees</b>	205	80	171	298
<b>Speaking Engagement Attendees**</b>	215	245	490	334
<b>FIPA Followers (Twitter, subscribers, members)</b>	1825	2104	2312	2,482

\*Reporting period July-December 2014

\*\*Estimates from external events organized by colleagues and partner organizations.

## Litigation: Number of cases

	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Litigation Cases</b>	7	5	6	3
<b>Litigation Cases Completed</b>	4	3	2	2



# Activities

## Public assistance and referrals

A major component of our programming is providing advice and assistance to a wide variety of individuals and organizations. In our increasingly digital world, it comes as no surprise that more people are seeking assistance through our website. Our "Help Topics" pages provide information on how to file FOI requests with various public bodies, appeal the decisions of those bodies if they are thought to be incorrect, request copies of personal records, and make privacy complaints to the appropriate commissioners and offices.

We also provide telephone and in-person assistance free of charge during normal business hours. In 2017, FIPA provided direct assistance to 161 people through our telephone and email helplines. In cases where more summary advice is needed, we provide basic legal assistance and referrals. In 2017, we provided legal assistance to 151 people.

## Public legal education

### Self-help materials and online education

FIPA provides the public with access to guided self-help materials where gaps in legal education are identified. Our website, with its help sections and online library, is one of our most accessible means of educating the public on the systems governing freedom of information and privacy protection in British Columbia and across Canada.

## Speeches and presentations

Representatives of FIPA often appear on panels and in conference sessions focused on various information rights issues. In 2017, FIPA's Executive Director made presentations at the 8th Annual Law of Policing Conference in Vancouver held by the Canadian Institute, and at the Right to Know Conference held by the Office of the Information and Commissioner of Canada in Ottawa.

## Events

Each year, FIPA produces a variety of public education events on freedom of information, privacy, and legislative and legal issues.

FIPA held its *Annual General Meeting* in June 2017. Our guest speaker was Sinziana Gutiu, a former Policy Analyst with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of British Columbia. Sinziana practiced law at international and national law firms in the areas of cyber liability, professional liability, insurance defense and construction law. She is an Executive Member of the BC Canadian Bar Association's Freedom of Information and Privacy Section, and enjoys presenting and writing about privacy and FOI, robotics, and technology law. The AGM was attended by **19** people, with **11** voting members (excluding board members) represented.

In July, FIPA took our annual FOI 101 workshop online as an interactive webinar, which covered basic access skills and gives members of the public the opportunity to talk through common FOI issues. The online pilot workshop reached **103** participants across BC and Canada with a few international attendees.



In September, FIPA presented the 2017 Information Summit at UBC Robson Square, a major conference which attracted **120 participants** and a number of expert speakers. The keynote speakers were Drew McArthur, the Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner of B.C. and Kirk LaPointe, Host of BIV, Roundhouse Radio. This year's theme was *Transparency: Has the Wave Broken*, and had panels including: "Latest developments on legal privilege and FOI," "Whistleblower law – The need for protection and what the new law should look like," "Indigenous governance and transparency – A way forward," and "Open government – The politics of information control."

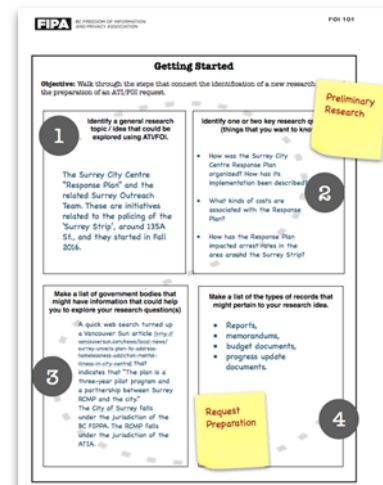
Following the Information Summit, FIPA hosted the annual **FOI 101** workshop during *Right to Know Week* in September, facilitated by board member and Kwantlen University professor Mike Larsen. This event teaches the basics of making FOI and ATI requests and how to handle common difficulties. The event was promoted with community and advocacy groups, and through the Law Foundation and other organizations. The feedback we received from attendees indicated that the workshop met or exceeded expectations. Our drop-in FOI 101

events for the general public often sees modest attendance, but participants indicate that they appreciate having workshops in their community.

This past year, we have noticed an increased demand for tailored and specialized FOI 101 workshops. In

October and November, FIPA delivered two tailored workshops with a combined attendance of over 50 individuals.

Through our 2017 events, FIPA representatives were able to raise awareness of current FOI and privacy issues with members of the public, sign up new members to our mailing list, and engage in important discussions with individuals about the access and privacy issues that are important to them. Hundreds of members of the public were in attendance.



## Building engagement in freedom of information and privacy rights

### Media interventions

As Canada's only organization devoted to information rights advocacy, FIPA appears regularly in news and media reports, both provincially and nationally. This year, FIPA appeared in 93 media reports.

FIPA also self-published a number of articles through our website and contributed to online outlets like the Huffington Post BC.

Additionally, we continue to distribute media alerts and releases to the BC and Canadian press. 2017 was an active year and we published 8 news releases, many of which received province-wide and even national coverage.

### Social media and online communications

FIPA uses Twitter and mailing lists to sustain its

online engagement. We communicate relevant news, keep our contacts up to date with our work and solicit engagement in our campaigns.

Our website redesign has allowed us to incorporate our social media tools into the website, resulting in greater interaction with members of the public across platforms. We have also prioritized our online content curating and development, with more frequent messages to members, website posts and tweets than in previous years.

In 2017, our Twitter followers and mailing list subscribers increased by over 7% to 2,482 people.

# Highlights

**FIPA is Canada's only** public interest advocacy and watchdog group fully dedicated to FOI and privacy issues. We constantly monitor the performance of government bodies and Canada's Information and Privacy Commissioners. In turn, we are frequently consulted on policy issues by politicians and government officials. We regularly engage in legal advocacy before BC's Information and Privacy Commissioner and various Canadian courts, and coordinate legal action with partner organizations to maximize effectiveness while avoiding duplication and overlap.

FIPA conducts ongoing research into the policy and legal climates that structure access and privacy regimes in BC and across Canada. We commission our own studies and provide research support to lawyers, journalists, students, and the general public. In the course of answering inquiries from the public and responding to stories in the media, we research emerging information rights issues by filing FOI requests, thus making use of FOI law as an effective advocacy and research tool.

FIPA is Canada's only public interest advocacy and watchdog group fully dedicated to FOI and privacy issues.

FIPA's request to the BC Ministry of Finance was for all correspondence, briefing notes, analysis and background documents prepared by or forwarded to the Ministry related to the speech. It would be expected that the Ministry would prepare some form of communication document, at minimum an e-mail advising of the speech and attaching a copy. Yet, the response to this FOI requests states that they were unable to find any such records or any records whatsoever. A complaint was filed with the OIPC.

**Application fees for FOI requests:** FIPA filed a complaint asking the Acting Commissioner to investigate the decisions by the Ministry of Finance to withhold parts of requested records that were originally requested on October 10, 2016 and then again on February 24, 2017. Both requests were met with significant redactions for which no particulars were provided, and questions regarding whether an adequate search was conducted were raised.

## Key Complaints

**No responsive records:** In January, FIPA requested that the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner investigate the failure of the Ministry of Finance to locate records regarding a widely publicized speech Mark Carney, the former head of the Bank of Canada, gave to the Vancouver Board of Trade regarding the housing market in June 2011.

This speech highlighted the skyrocketing and precarious nature of Vancouver's housing market back in 2011. Carney goes as far to say that the Vancouver "housing market [is] taking on characteristics of financial asset markets."

The original request was for all records from January 1, 2015 to present related to possible imposition of application fees for FOI requests, as well as any analysis that may exist of federal figures showing the cost to taxpayers of processing said fees.

**Duty to Document:** FIPA led the way with our critique of Bill 6, which the provincial government claimed was the first legislated duty to document in Canada. We pointed out that the government's plan was rejected by the Legislative Committee that reviewed the Act in 2016, that it excluded any review by the Information and Privacy Commissioner and was

largely discretionary. These critiques and accompanying public awareness campaign made sure this issue was front and center heading into the provincial election campaign.

#### **Election questionnaire to BC party leaders:**

FIPA sent a 10 item questionnaire to the leaders of the three main parties, and posted the responses on our website. Given the absence of material issued by the parties in their platforms and campaign events, FIPA's questionnaire was the only place British Columbians could get information about where the parties stood on these important issues. These responses will also be useful in holding the government to account during the coming months and years.

British Columbians are in favour of a strong freedom of information system.

## Key Submissions

#### **Reform of PIPEDA:**

In February, FIPA presented an oral submission and recommendations for reform of the Personal Information and Protection of Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) to the Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics (ETHI). The submission focused on the four points raised by Commissioner Therrien in his letter of December 2, 2016, with two additional points: meaningful consent, reputation and privacy, enforcement powers, adequacy, coverage of federal political parties, and algorithmic transparency.

Access to information plays a crucial role providing citizens with the ability to pull information from government.

#### **Privacy and Connected/Automated vehicles:**

In May, FIPA appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Transportation and Communications to testify to the importance of privacy protection in the Canadian automobile industry. After highlighting the findings from our 2015 Connected Car report, we emphasized the specific recommendations laid out in said report, and answered questions from the Senators on the Committee.

**NAFTA Consultation Submission:** In July, FIPA participated in the federal consultation on the NAFTA negotiations. Specifically, we pushed

for the protection of domestic data storage which has been targeted by the US Trade Representative's office as "barriers to digital trade."

#### **ETHI Submission on ATI Reform:**

In November, FIPA presented its submission on ATI reform to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. This comes after Commissioner Legault issued a special report detailing her

many criticisms of what the government is proposing to which we added our own extensive criticisms.

## FIPA in court

**BC Election Act:** FIPA's constitutional challenge to the provincial *Election Act* concluded during this reporting period with the Supreme Court of Canada ultimately siding with FIPA. FIPA has argued that the restrictions on third party election advertising and the registration

requirements for third party election advertisers in the *BC Election Act* are an unjustified violation of the right to free expression guaranteed by section 2(b) of the

Charter.

In 2014, a BC Supreme Court judge ruled that although these third party spending provisions did violate the right to freedom of expression under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the violation was not 'trivial or insubstantial' as claimed by the government, it could be justified under section 1 of the *Charter*. FIPA's appeal of that decision was heard in February 2015, and two months later the BC Court of Appeal issued a 2-1 ruling upholding the BC Supreme Court's decision.

Thanks to the effort of our pro bono counsel Sean Hern and Alison Latimer of Farris, Vaughn, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that election advertising laws do not apply to those who are merely expressing their own views during an election, rather than engaging in actual advertising campaigns. However



there is ongoing controversy over Elections BC's interpretation of the ruling, and subsequent requirements regarding printed and other forms of expression.

**Legal Privilege:** FIPA has been monitoring two recent cases for potential intervention. One is a BC Supreme Court decision involving the City of Richmond, the other a BC Court of Appeal ruling on use of privileged information received through the FOI process. The first case has been abandoned as being moot, while we are awaiting word on a possible grant of leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada on the second one.

We were involved in planning for two potential court interventions, but neither case ended up proceeding.

**FOI and legal privilege:** FIPA was preparing to intervene in two cases, one at the BC Court of Appeal (which was discontinued) and one in the Supreme Court of Canada (leave to appeal was refused). We are awaiting passage of Bill C-58, as the Canadian Bar Association has threatened to challenge its provisions regarding the office of the Information Commissioner and documents where privilege is claimed. If that challenge goes ahead we have discussed the

matter with counsel and are preparing to intervene.

## Coalition and Partner Work

FIPA continues to be an active member of the Protect our Privacy Coalition, a group of more than 50 civil society and public interest organizations working to protect privacy and fight repressive legislation such as the 2015 *Anti-Terrorism Act*. We were also active in coalitions opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership and its negative effect on privacy and internet freedom.

## Other Research and Casework

In the course of answering inquiries from the public and responding to stories in the media, FIPA researches a number of emerging information rights issues by filing our own FOI requests and working with our various partner organizations.


We had several FOI requests in the system during 2017, mostly dealing with issues related to fees in the BC FOI system.



**97%** of British Columbians think it is **important** that BC government officials be **legally required** to keep accurate and complete records of what they do on the job.




**85%** of British Columbians believe there should be **penalties** for government officials who interfere with information access rights.



**84%** of people agreed it is **somewhat** or **very important** that key reforms to information access law be passed **before** the next BC election.

Learn more at: [fipa.bc.ca/poll-2/](http://fipa.bc.ca/poll-2/)



**A majority of British Columbians (87%)** think BC education subsidiaries (school boards, colleges, universities, etc.) should be covered by FOI laws.

Learn more at: [fipa.bc.ca/poll-2/](http://fipa.bc.ca/poll-2/)

# In Memoriam

Gwen Barlee, long-time member of FIPA's Board of Directors, Policy Director of the Wilderness Committee, and a vital member of British Columbia's nonprofit community died in June 2017 at the age of 54, a year after being diagnosed with cancer. During her life, she distinguished herself as a passionate and tenacious advocate for access to information. Through her work with FIPA and the Wilderness Committee, Gwen 'led by example', both as an active and strategic user of ATI/FOI laws in pursuit of government accountability and as a voice for the protection and extension of the right to know.

Gwen served for over ten years on the Board of Directors of FIPA, eventually in the capacity of Vice President. She played an important role in setting the strategic direction for the organization, and FIPA thrived during her tenure. She was a staunch advocate for public education, and she often participated in public panels - for example, at BC Information Summits and at Media Democracy Days conferences - where she shared her perspective on both the importance of ATI/FOI processes and the shortcomings of our current access regimes.



Gwen possessed a deep and lifelong passion for wildlife and

environmental justice. She led numerous campaigns to protect species at risk, championed the establishment and protection of provincial and national parks, and pushed governments to formally protect natural habitats. Early in her career, Gwen recognized that effective research, public education, and advocacy related to environmental causes should be informed by accurate and up-to-date information, but she frequently found that governments were reluctant to provide this information proactively or voluntarily. Her response to this was to become a skilled and persistent user of Canadian and provincial ATI/FOI mechanisms.



It was a privilege to know Gwen, to work with her, and to learn from her.

Mike Larsen, on behalf of the Board, Staff, and Members of FIPA

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