



Box 6300, Station A
Toronto, ON
M5W 1P7

Oct. 17, 2001

The Honourable Anne McLellan P.C., M.P.
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
284 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H8
Fax: (613) 943-0044

Dear Minister McLellan,

Open Government Canada has heard that in the next few weeks, the government will release a report which proposes changes to the Access to Information Act, changes to regulations made pursuant to the Act, and changes in internal policy relating to the administration of the Act.

Research has shown regulatory changes, and changes to internal policy, can have serious effects on the use of freedom of information laws by citizens. As a consequence, we are writing to ask for an assurance that the government will not implement changes of regulatory or internal policy before the public has had an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed changes. Specifically, we request a four-month period for review and comment on regulatory and internal policy changes.

We believe this is consistent with your promise, on May 29, in the House of Commons, of "an open and public dialogue about the future of access to information". To date, the Task Force has not published its research papers on fee reform and other administrative protections. Nor did the Task Force publish its promised interim report. No other document released by the Task Force gives any intimation of its plans in these areas.

As you know, proposals for legislative reform must be reviewed and approved by Parliament. But regulatory and internal policy changes can have an equally profound effect on the citizen's right to information. A four-month period for review and comment provides a minimal opportunity for public participation on reform of our access to information system.

We look forward to your reply. This letter will be posted to our public web-site.

Sincerely,

Mike Gordon, chairman
mgordon@opengovernmentcanada.org

cc: MPs Committee on Access to Information