

Canadian  
Historical Association



Société historique  
du Canada

Ottawa, 31 March 2017

The Honourable Scott Brison  
President of the Treasury Board  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Brison,

I write on behalf of The Canadian Historical Association / La Société historique du Canada, devoted to fostering the scholarly study and communication of history in Canada. It is the largest of its kind in the country. Our mandate encompasses the dissemination of information and historical knowledge into both the scholarly and public spheres, and as such, we want to ensure the accessibility of historical records to all Canadians.

The Liberal government's announcement that it would not pursue reform of the Access to Information Act (ATIA) at this time came as a shock and disappointment. Transparency was key to the Liberal government's election platform and earlier announcements indicated that revision of the Act was on the government's agenda. The shuffling of this commitment into the future is an abandonment of this promise.

The claim that the government needs time to study and consider the issue is not, in our view, warranted. The problems with the Act have been well documented over the years, not only by academic organizations like ours, but also by many organizations dedicated to contemporary political and journalistic research and analysis. Regular reports by the Office of the Information Commissioner have laid out problems in detail, as well as some legislative solutions. They have also benchmarked our Act against those in other countries and we do not measure up well. Indeed, the international Centre for Law and Democracy ranks information acts internationally, and in its Global Right to Information ranking, Canada now stands 49 of 111. This is not a position to celebrate. It is one we should change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Sangster'.

Joan Sangster  
President

cc. Office of the Information Commissioner