

Charlie Angus

Member of Parliament / député
Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-baie James

Ottawa

900 Édifice La Promenade Building
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
Tel/Tél: 613-992-2919
Fax/Télé: 613-995-0747

Constituency / Circonscription

202 - 60 ave Wilson Ave Timmins, Ontario P4N 2S7 Tel/Tél : 705-268-6464 Fax/Télé: 705-266-9125	201 - 30 rue Second St Kirkland Lake, Ontario P2N 1R1 Tel/Tél. : 705-567-2747 Fax/Télé: 705-567-5232
--	--



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Tony Clement
Confederation Building Room 278
House of Commons
Ottawa Canada K1A 0A6

March 20th 2015

Re: Conservative government bankrupting the Office of the Information Commissioner

Minister Clement,

I am pleased to receive your response to my request for you to meet with Canada's Information Commissioner's office and immediately provide her the resources that her office requires to fulfil her mandate and protect Canadians; however, I find it confusing.

In your response you stated:

"I know the important role the Information Commissioner play with respect to the ATI program and I am committed to working with the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada so that it has the resources to fulfil this role."

Your government is responsible for determining this funding and the Information Commissioner has made it clear- she does not have the resources needed to do her job:

"I will not be able to function without additional resources, as I have only \$37,000 remaining in my budget."

"Unless my budget is increased, I have only one option going into the next fiscal year to keep within my appropriations: to cut the program."

"I think that would be catastrophic... If delays are too long, it means the investigative process is no longer valid, in which case, I would no longer be delivering on my mandate."

"Rest assured: I will back away from the fiscal cliff rather than go over the edge. But, as I do, Canadians' quasi-constitutional right of access will be increasingly denied."

Furthermore in response to my request for additional resources you wrote on March 12th 2015:

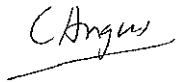
"should the information commissioner put forward a submission for funds, I along with my fellow board members will exercise due diligence in considering it."

Three months earlier on Thursday December 4th 2014 the Information Commissioner made it clear in her appearance in front of a Parliamentary Committee that she had put forward funding requests on multiple occasions over the past two years:

- "As I said in my last departmental performance report, which was recently tabled in Parliament, without additional funding, I will no longer be able to carry out my mandate responsibly and ensure the full respect of Canadian' rights to access to information"
- "I have raised the red flag about this financial situation at every available opportunity. I have also pursued every option available to me to preserve my budget and ensure the integrity of the program. This includes making requests for funding through the 2014, and most recently, the 2015 budget process, so far without success".
- "For the past two years, we have submitted our budget requests to the Minister of Justice, who is responsible for our office, in order to receive funding under the federal budget and be able to make a submission to Treasury Board. My colleague spoke with the people at the Treasury Board Secretariat to find out what funding mechanism we could use to make a request, as an officer of Parliament. I believe Ms. Michaud was even in contact with them this week, via email."
- "We were prepared to make a submission to Treasury Board but were told to direct our request to the Minister of Justice and to go through the estimates process. That is what we did. If the government tells us it will consider a Treasury Board submission, obviously, we will make one. It's ready to go, in fact."

Given that your letter suggests that submissions for funding would be considered, but that the funding shortage remains, it appears that there has been no consideration of additional funding to allow the Commissioner to fulfil her mandate. The reason is unclear: were you never made aware of these funding requests or were all of these funding requests somehow lost? If that is the case, will you look into this matter to find out why these funding requests did not reach your desk? I am sure you would agree that it would not be appropriate for a Minister of the Crown to misrepresent a very clear position put forward by an Officer of Parliament.

Sincerely,



Charlie Angus
MP Timmins-James Bay