

[REDACTED]

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**From:** LEGCOMM  
**Sent:** March 3, 2025 8:00 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Hebb, Gordon  
**Subject:** FW: Bill 1- Public Bills Committee  
**Attachments:** Public Bills CommitteeDocument1.docx

FYI

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**From:** Clara Gray [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** March 3, 2025 7:55 AM  
**To:** LEGCOMM <LEGCOMM@novascotia.ca>; Clara Gray <claragray643@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Bill 1- Public Bills Committee

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**\*\* EXTERNAL EMAIL / COURRIEL EXTERNE \*\***

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Hello

I am on the list of presenters in regard to Bill 1. , and I am told I will receive notice of the committee meeting by telephone.

I am concerned however that notice of the committee meeting will not be sufficient for me to make it to Halifax from Cape Breton in time to make a presentation.

I am sending the attached letter now to be sure that my voice is heard at committee, should the committee meet in my absence.

Please distribute it to the committee members accordingly. Thankyou.

Respectfully

Clara Gray  
[REDACTED]

March 02, 2025

The Public Bills Committee,

Nova Scotia Legislature

Attention: Chair, The Honourable Becky Druhan, and Members of the Committee

Dear Honourable Members of the Legislature,

Re: Bill 1

My name is Clara Gray. I am no one important and I represent no group nor organization nor agency. I live in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. I am here as an individual constituent. I am compelled to speak to you as a citizen of the Province of Nova Scotia about Bill 1, in particular about access to information.

In that regard, I am directly affected by what is proposed in this Bill as I believe so are you, and your friends, and your families, and your communities and mine, and the functioning of every aspect of our government and its agencies, and so are all citizens of Nova Scotia personally affected by this Bill, and Not At All in a good way.

I actually can't believe that I have to speak on so essential an issue as transparency to this government.

"For me, its always about more access to more Nova Scotians", says Premier Tim Houston on air.

That clearly was not the governments mindset when pondering Bill 1. Quite to the contrary appears to be the case.

I am 68 years old, my childhood marked by Remembrance Days, with thousands of soldiers gathering, the horror of Hitler fresh in their minds, having had to defend democracy here at home, far from home. Men of stature, John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King still loom large in my mind.

A message from my father to his children, passing on to us the words of Mahatma Ghandi, also looms large in my mind, and that is "To act fearlessly upon what one believes to be right", and that has helped lead me here to this message to my government today.

Don't hide the truth we seek. It belongs to us. You are here to serve.

Truth and justice called me from the inequities and injustices I observed all around me growing up, to practice law.

Today I wonder am I time travelling? Why would we go backwards? Let's not mince words here. What in the world is going on when our government is proposing to conceal the truth from us, under the guise of so largely subjective words as "trivial, frivolous and vexatious", or at all?

I no longer practice law, which is a subject of litigation and so I will not, in this House, speak to any details of that case.

I can say however that I have learned in these past ten years, that only bad actors seek to conceal the truth from someone who is involved in, and or affected by, the truth being sought to be concealed.

Yes, there are times when the reason for a FOIPOP application may not be entirely clear to the person who receives it, or to the government body charged with responding to it. The request, to someone who

does not know the story, may appear to be without cause, or particularly broad, thought a fishing expedition, though most who fish, know where to go for fish. The request may not be well articulated, or may seem too wordy, not well constructed, lacking precision, possibly affected by emotion, thought misplaced. That may be especially true for individuals who are self represented, fighting on their own, without any help, for the truth from some agency of government or other, especially for those who have long been thought lesser of, now at law protected by enumerated grounds within Human Rights legislation, but still discriminated against, marginalized, on a daily and systemic basis. It may also be true for those who are ill or old or from a distant land or for any number of reasons may not have the legal speak and succinctness of a trained and active legal beagle, but all deserve no less a forthright response from government as any information requested might affect them.

I am one of those people. I know that what some may refer to as the "fine nuances" of government organizations may be anything but, and upon investigation of the facts, that those "fine nuances", may prove 'eyes wide shut' systemic wrongdoing found wanting for justice.

In my own experience, FOIPOP applications, and the work of the Privacy Commission has been essential in learning the truth of my own personal circumstances, including that those facts were otherwise being kept from me with the stated intention that I never learn the truth. I am thankful for the independent work of the commission. My own applications, I believe three in number, only one remaining in the review process presently, may not have been models of construction but they were appropriately directed for appropriate reasons that few outside my own understanding at the time of my requests could have appreciated , especially as it may relate to a complex matter.

I fear in retrospect, as I cast my mind toward a future which would seek to limit rather than expand access to information, that my own applications would, under Bill 1, be definitively more likely to have been denied for the above noted reasons, and possibly also, allowing more readily for reasons nefarious.

These are tenuous times. Democracies are under attack. Trust in our own government is essential. Once a model of democracy, our neighbour to the south, the United States of America, is presently hosting its own would be dictator in the Whitehouse. Rights are being trampled upon. Lies have become alternative truths, and government is running moblike.

Here at home in Nova Scotia, the dangers that Trumps government represents are as real as anywhere else on earth. It is up to us to hold our elected representatives and the agencies of our government to account. It is up to you, our government, to maintain a steady course as a better, more progressive and stronger government, acting in good faith, always transparent, standing up to avoid the publicly abusive pitfalls of power, for the sake of enduring democracy.

I say leave the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act as it is, or broaden its reach for information to make it easier for the public to have the information they may request, and, if anything, strengthen the power of the Commission to demand information requested be provided, save for national security reasons, without thought of concealment.

To do otherwise is to slide on the slippery slope alongside todays Whitehouse where the emperor of non disclosure resides. You are the keepers of the public trust. Without transparency there can be no trust.

I am not alone in the belief that truth and transparency matter to democracy.

In 2013, the then former secretary general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, remarked at Transparency International's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, "If corruption is a disease, transparency is a central part of its treatment." One must ask what and why would the government want to hide from the public knowing?

The Dalai Lama has said that "A lack of transparency results in distrust, and a deep sense of insecurity" I personally have already suffered a complete loss of trust, along the loss of personal security because of failures by government agencies to be transparent. A sense of insecurity response to Bill 1 is what this letter represents.

Mother Theresa advised; "Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway" I agree. This is what we teach our children. Given Bill 1 ,such as it is, should I tell my grandchildren that this rule does not apply to them if they are working in a public capacity?

I refer you to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms , the preamble beginning "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law" , together with the Holy Bible upon which we place our hand in our courts ,wherein the laws that you make are entrusted to be properly interpreted and enforced, and to be ruled inapplicable where they conflict unlawfully with superior legislation.

In Proverbs 12: 22 we are directed to delight in honesty. " The Lord detests lying but he delights in people who are trustworthy", and in 2 Corinthians 4:2 ; "Rather we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God"

My message is that truth, trust and transparency in governance are essential to democracy.

The public is relying on you, even in silence, to ensure these values are protected for the benefit of every person in Nova Scotia. No one is running around making applications for access to information for reasons trivial to themselves, or simply to be vexing to government, nor I believe, because they have nothing else better to do.

We make applications for access to information because it matters to know the truth.

I ask you to make recommendations consistent herewith for the sake of enduring democracy and for no other nor any improper purpose.

Respectfully

Clara Gray,

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]