

## Further Observations on the Conservative Caucus Report:

A number of people continue to write concerning what has been called the “Lawand Report”. Some have not read the review of the matter which is available on the Ombudsman’s website and I would direct them there.

Most of the correspondence appears to part of a campaign stimulated by an organization or person. There is a similarity in the style and content of the messages. Many imply or state that the report must be part of a broader, concerted effort by CBC News to misstate government policy and undermine the Conservative government.

I would like to make a few observations about this campaign:

- My review speaks for itself. The journalist used an answer to a separate question as an implied answer to the demonstrators outside the Conservative caucus meeting. This is a violation of CBC policy. I found that it was misleading in that it did not capture Mr. Harper’s actual response to the demonstrators. However, Ms. Lawand did not misstate government policy. Even in his response to a question about the demonstrators, Mr. Harper concluded that, while it was important to listen to views from all sides, the government would still make its own decisions. In other parts of the press conference it was clear that, as Ms. Lawand reported, the government at that point was not changing its policy. She went on to report that Mr. Harper felt that, when all voices were heard, his policy would be endorsed by the majority of Canadians.
- During my time as Ombudsman, through the intense period of a closely fought Federal Election, I have not received a previous complaint about Ms. Lawand’s work. Some may remember the work she did during the Gomery Commission.
- I have received many communications alleging a concerted plan within the CBC to skew editorial coverage. I have observed CBC editorial process for close to 30 years both within and outside the CBC, through Conservative and Liberal Federal governments, boards and Presidents appointed by those parties. I have never observed a directive from a President designed to set a policy of news coverage tending in one direction or another. Clearly, human beings making editorial decisions, or their supervisors making hundreds of decisions a day, sometimes make mistakes. If the mistakes are persistent, or the result of personal prejudice, action should, of course, be taken.
- The CBC has acknowledged that errors are sometimes made and created the Office of the Ombudsman independent of those in charge of news coverage. It is the only broadcast news organization in the country to have such a position. I should point out that the Ombudsman cannot order up coverage nor make personnel decisions.
- The defining ethic of good, aggressive journalism is skepticism, not matter what party is in power. It’s been my observation that every government in history has felt that the media has been hostile to its policies and practices. It is the job of the journalist, the CBC in particular, to question and probe. That is often viewed as

prejudice (or conspiracy) by whomever happens to be in power. The job of editorial supervisors and, subsequently, the Ombudsman, is to guard against cynicism replacing skepticism as the operating philosophy.