



Federal Accountability Act and Action Plan



Highlights







On April 11, 2006, the Government of Canada introduced the Federal Accountability Act and Action Plan, delivering on its commitment to make government more accountable. This is one of a series of documents describing proposed actions to respond to this commitment.

The context








Through the *Federal Accountability Act* and Action Plan, the Government of Canada is bringing forward specific measures to help strengthen accountability and increase transparency and oversight in government operations. The comprehensive Action Plan includes a proposed *Federal Accountability Act*, supporting policy and other non-legislative measures, and a draft bill to amend the *Access to Information Act*.

The Action Plan



Through this Action Plan, the Government will:


-  **reform the financing of political parties** by reducing the opportunity to exert political influence through large donations to political parties and candidates;
-  **ban secret donations to political candidates** by prohibiting electoral district associations and parties from transferring money to their candidates from trust funds;
-  **strengthen the role of the Ethics Commissioner** by introducing a new *Conflict of Interest Act* and granting powers to the new Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to enforce it;
-  **toughen the *Lobbyists Registration Act*** by introducing stricter rules for lobbyist activity and giving a new Commissioner of Lobbying enhanced powers to investigate and enforce them;
-  **ensure truth in budgeting with a Parliamentary Budget Authority** by creating the position of Parliamentary Budget Officer to provide objective analysis to Members of Parliament and parliamentary committees concerning the state of the nation’s finances, trends in the national economy, and the financial cost of proposals under consideration by either House;
-  **make qualified government appointments** by introducing a uniform process for appointing Agents and Officers of Parliament and ensuring that public appointments are based on merit;

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-  **clean up the procurement of government contracts** by enshrining in law a commitment to fairness, transparency, and openness in the procurement process, and by appointing an independent Procurement Auditor to provide additional oversight of the procurement process;
-  **clean up government polling and advertising** by preventing public opinion research and advertising contracts from being used for partisan or personal benefit, and by appointing an Independent Advisor to conduct a full review of public opinion research practices discussed in Chapter 5 of the Auditor General's November 2003 report that the previous government explicitly exempted from Justice Gomery's consideration;
-  **provide real protection to whistleblowers** who disclose government wrongdoing by introducing specific penalties for offences, granting powers to the new Public Sector Integrity Commissioner, creating the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Tribunal to consider cases of reprisal, providing public-sector employees with access to legal counsel and continuing to ensure they have adequate access to the courts, and providing a \$1,000 reward to public-service employees who have the courage to expose wrongdoing in the workplace;
-  **strengthen access to information legislation** by extending its reach and scope, and by tabling for consideration by parliamentary committee a draft bill to further amend the *Access to Information Act* and a discussion paper to ensure the full consideration of views and possible approaches;
-  **strengthen the power of the Auditor General** by expanding the reach and scope of the Auditor General's investigative powers to help Parliament hold the government to account;
-  **strengthen auditing and accountability within departments** by clarifying the managerial responsibilities of deputy heads within the framework of ministerial responsibility, and by bolstering the internal audit function within departments and Crown corporations; and
-  **create a Director of Public Prosecutions**, outside the Department of Justice, with the authority to conduct criminal prosecutions under federal law.

This Action Plan strikes an appropriate balance between oversight and flexibility. The Government of Canada will strengthen and streamline its management policies and consult with stakeholders on reducing barriers that inhibit access to government. It will:

-  **establish an independent blue-ribbon panel** to identify barriers to access for recipients of government grants and contributions, and to recommend changes to Government policies and practices to ensure a fair, economical, and efficient delivery of grants and contributions programs;
-  **review its procurement and financial management policies** to identify where they could be streamlined, and where the Government could replace transaction-level requirements and rules with basic principles of management accountability and transparency; and

 **repeal policies and regulations** where they inhibit the effectiveness of public-service employees, rather than promote accountability and good management.

For more information

For more information on the measures proposed in the *Federal Accountability Act* and Action Plan, please visit www.accountability.gc.ca, or contact General Enquiries at Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat:

Email: info@tbs-sct.gc.ca
Telephone: (613) 957-2400
Toll free: 1-877-636-0656
TTY: (613) 957-9090
Facsimile: (613) 998-9071