

History's lessons on reforming the Access to Information Act in Canada

Dean Beeby

December 2023

LITTLE DORRIT

CHARLES DICKENS

ORIGINAL PARTS

LONDON 1847

No.

No.

No. II.

No. I.

Part 1a.



LITTLE
DORRIT

BY
CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH
ILLUSTRATIONS BY H. K. BROWN.

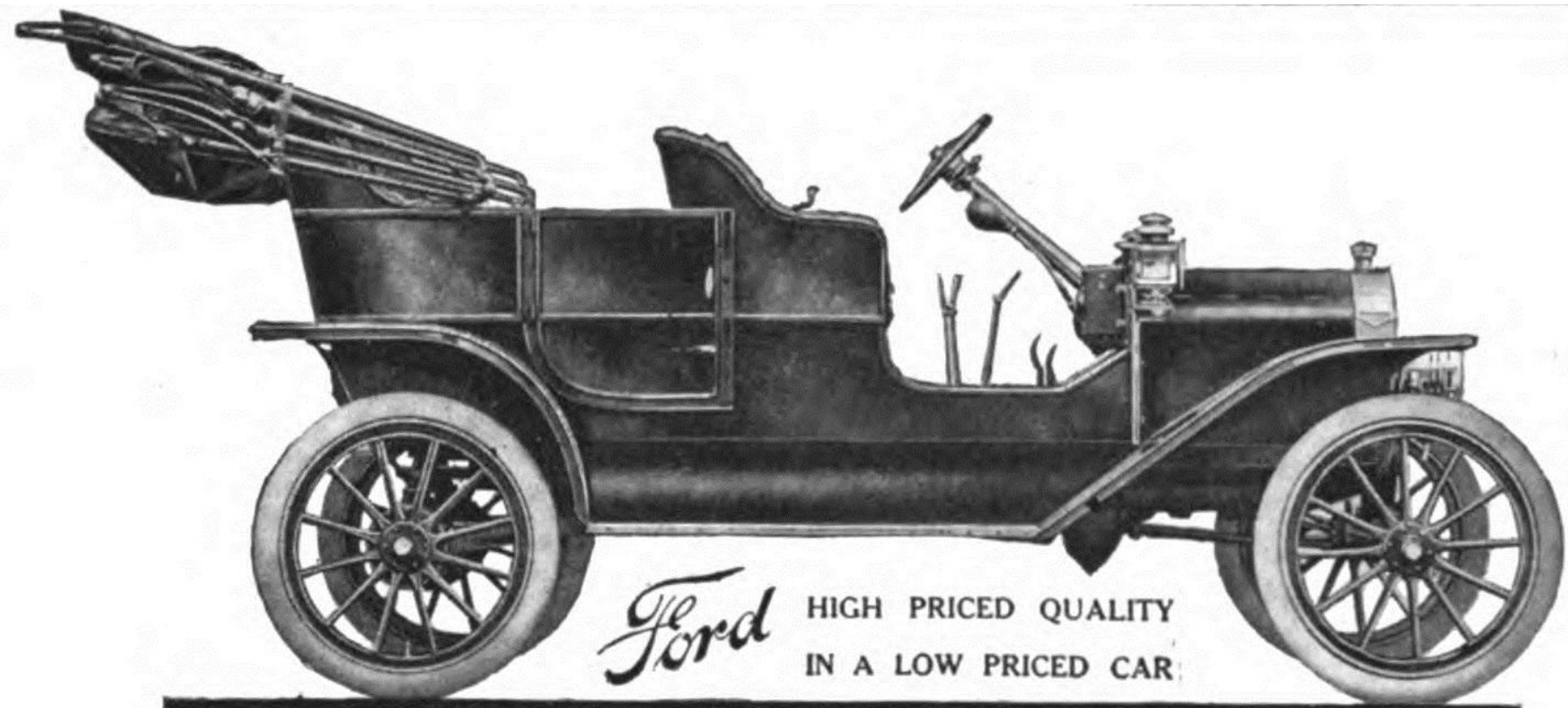
LONDON: BRADSHAW & EVANS, DUNDEE STREET.
ALBION, A. WATSON, BIRMINGHAM; BISHOP AND SON, LEAMINGTON; J. WILKINSON, OXFORD.

W. The Author reserves the right of Translation.



“It is true that every new premier and every new government, coming in because they had upheld a certain thing as necessary to be done, were no sooner coming in than they applied their utmost faculties to discovering How not to do it.”

Little Dorrit, Book 1, Chapt. 10



Ford

HIGH PRICED QUALITY
IN A LOW PRICED CAR





C-39.

Third Session, Twenty-Sixth Parliament, 14 Elizabeth II, 1965.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS OF CANADA.

BILL C-39.

An Act to better assure the Public's Rights to Freedom of Access to Public Documents and Information about Government Administration (Administrative Disclosure).

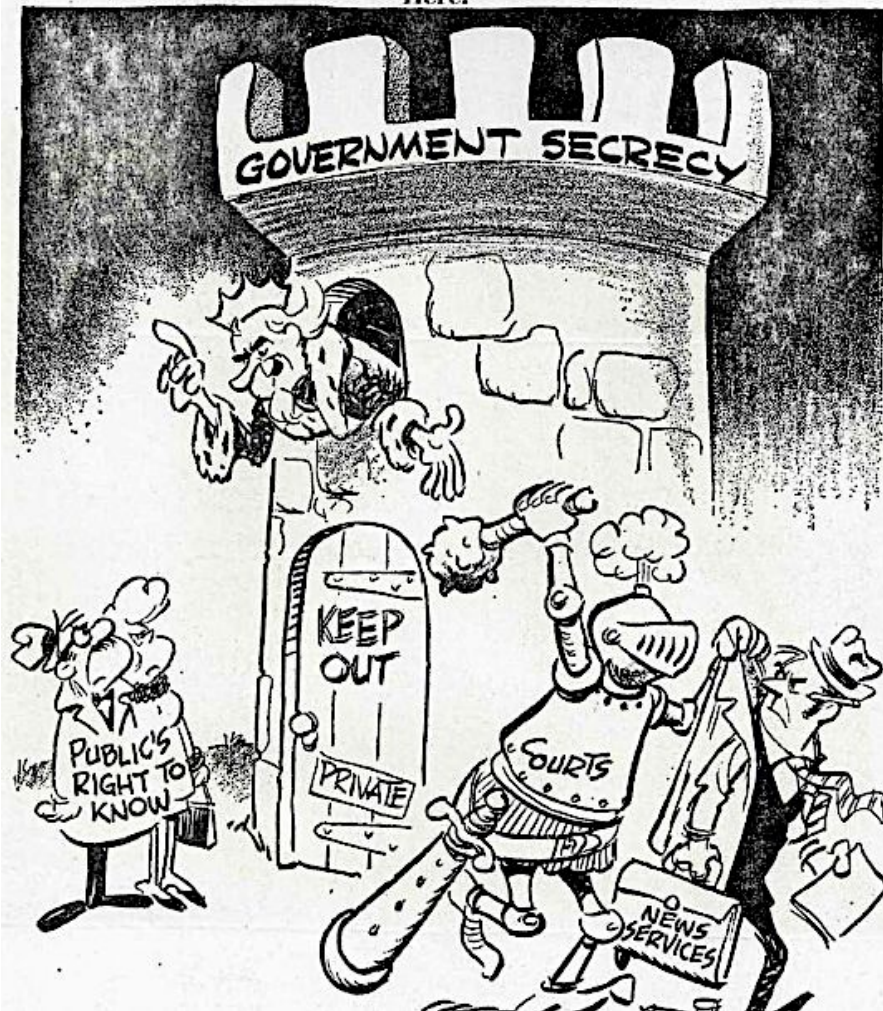
First reading, April 8, 1965.

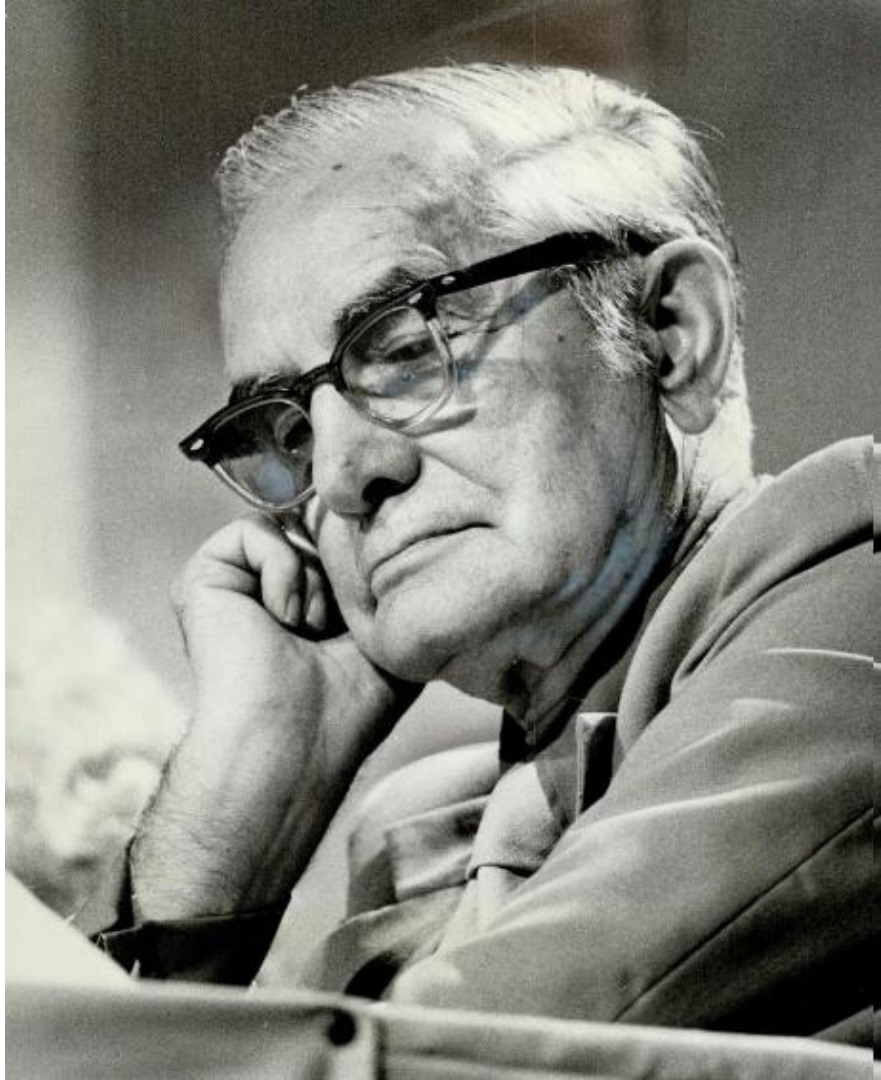
Mr. MATHER.

EXPLANATORY NOTE.

This bill is in aid of the public's right to know in what manner a government is administering the public duties entrusted and delegated to it by the people: save for exceptions that are in the public interest, the bill enacts Bentham's basic parliamentary Rule that public affairs must be conducted publicly.

"Forget That Peeping Tom ... We'll Tell You What's Going On In Here!"





“Back in those days I was very much a novice in the weird and mysterious workings of the government machine ... The bureaucrats generally had no time for us. We could not get to see official records.”

Ged Baldwin on arriving in Ottawa as a backbench MP in the late 1950s.

C-258

Second Session, Twenty-Ninth Parliament,
23 Elizabeth II, 1974

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS OF CANADA

BILL C-258

An Act respecting the right of the public to
information concerning the public business

First reading, March 12, 1974

MR. BALDWIN

C-258

Deuxième Session, Vingt-neuvième Législature,
23 Elizabeth II, 1974

CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES DU CANADA

BILL C-258

Loi concernant le droit qu'a le public à l'information
relativement aux affaires publiques

Première lecture, le 12 mars 1974

M. BALDWIN

EXPLANATORY NOTE

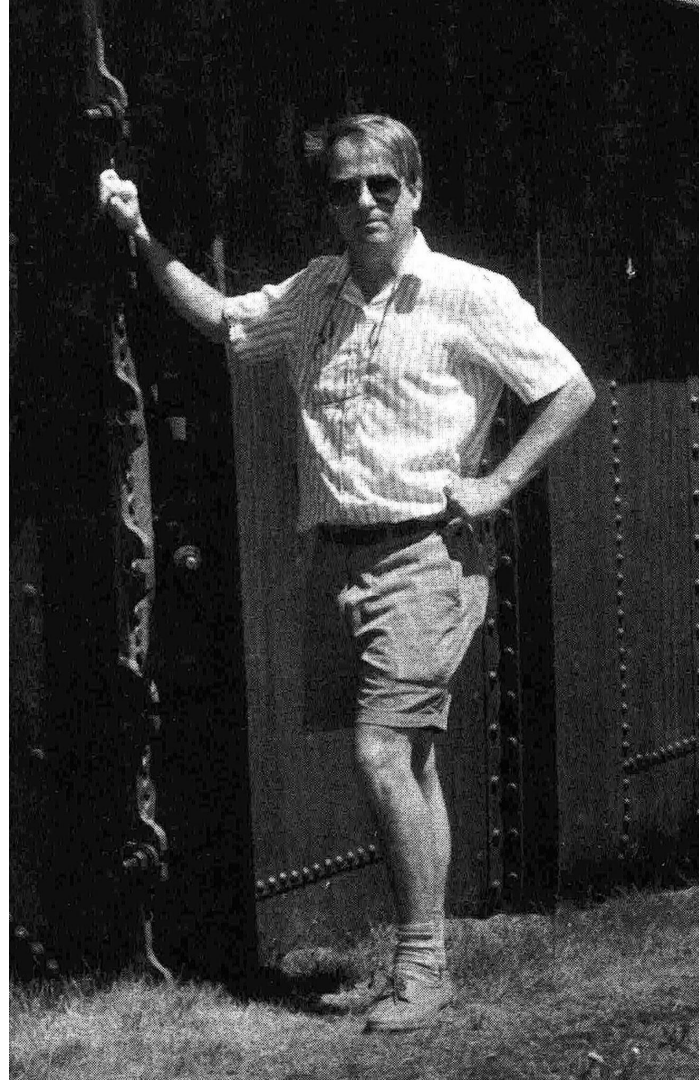
The principle of this Bill is: that the citizen's right to know the public business is fundamental to a participatory democracy. The purpose of the Bill is to establish that right as a fundamental freedom under the protection of the courts.





The Access to Information Act “allows government departments legally to withhold information indefinitely – forever – for specific defined reasons that cannot be challenged ... [Secrecy] enables governments and bureaucracies to hide mistakes, dishonesty and similar embarrassments.”

John Bryden, 1989













ACCESS TO INFORMATION IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

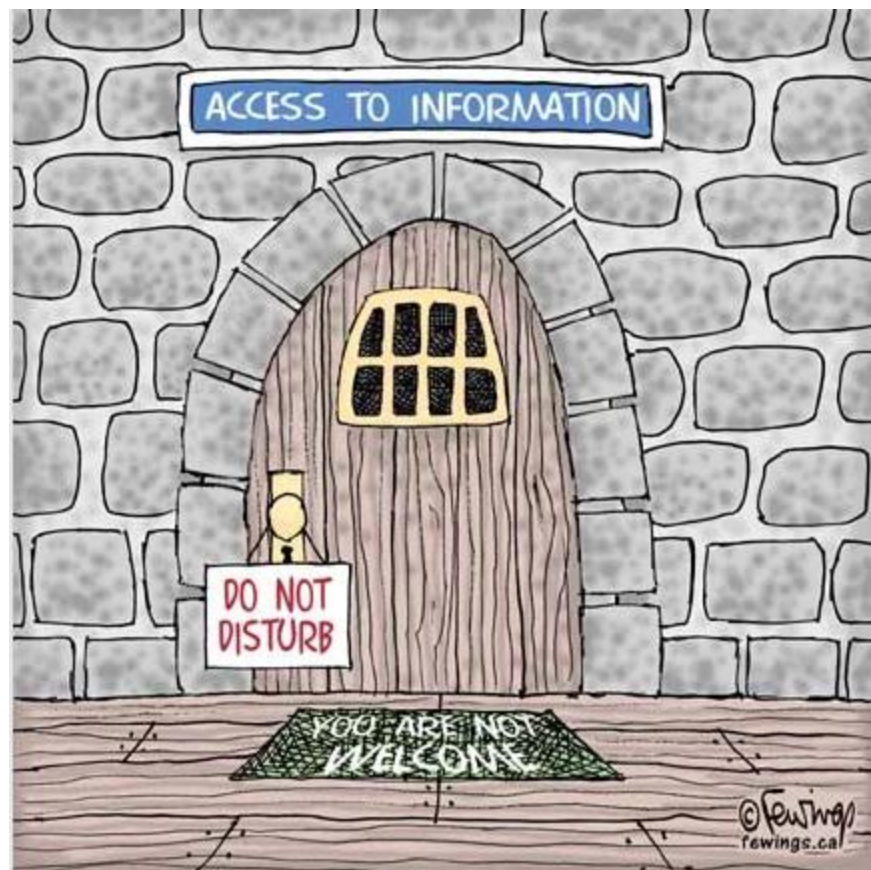




COME, REDACT...













THIS IS WHERE
WE HIDE OUR
PUBLIC INFORMATION.

MINISTRY
FILE
ROOM

SLANE
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Next steps

1. Agree on a *few* needed reforms
2. Press parties to include in election platforms
3. Secure commitments for quick implementation

