

Backgrounder

August 2026

The Problem & Context

Canada has a long standing problem that is endangering democratic governance and accountability paving the path to the disintegration of our democratic institutions and authoritarianism. The problem is that our laws and political and organizational cultures do not protect whistleblowers or encourage whistleblowing. Whistleblowing is long recognized globally as one of the best – if not the best- anticorruption mechanism in the world. In fact, it is one of the pillars of democracy alongside access to information and privacy. In Canada, it is public knowledge that these critical mechanisms are all on the [brink of collapse](#).

As [2018 Canadian research demonstrates](#), this problem exists federally and provincially as provincial laws for the most part, are modeled on the federal *Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act* (PSDPA) and covers only public servants. The other approximately 95% of workers in Canada are not protected. Further, the PSDPA, according to [2021 research](#) by the Government Accountability Project (GAP) and the International Bar Association (IBA) is last on a list of some 60 countries whose laws were analyzed against best practices. The PSDPA has no best practices rendering it essentially unworkable. The one it did have, mandated by law, was never done which amounted to “disobeying a statute”.

Evidence suggests that this weak law was passed knowingly flawed as Justice Gomery in his 1995-96 Sponsorship Inquiry Report warned before hand that he was concerned it would not work unless certain key amendments were made. They were ignored. The law continues to suppress and control public servants contrary to its stated purpose, benefiting the wrongdoers and shielding the powerful at senior levels. Successive governments have strongly resisted and even obstructed any attempts to establish effective whistleblower protection laws [since 1991](#) - thirty five years and no progress. The cues picked up from political leaders’ behaviour by Canada’s public administration was and is, “this matter is not a priority”. This has resulted in very unwelcoming cultures for whistleblowers and whistleblowing indeed. The consequences are enormous. Awareness of this

Backgrounder (cont'd)

led to WBC facilitating the legal analysis of the CBSA Luc Sabourin whistleblowing case which has clear national security, accountability and other serious implications. The report highlights the systemic failures and what needs to be done to fix them to prevent future damage.

Whistleblowing Canada Research Society.

Who we are

Findings of [a 2017 case study](#) of an important 1996 drug safety whistleblowing case at Health Canada still relevant today, sparked the 2019 founding of Whistleblowing Canada Research Society – a non-profit corporation with charitable status. The 2017 study by a founding Director identified that reprisals occur- a major obstacle to reporting wrongdoing- because of flawed laws, dysfunctional political and organizational cultures, and attitudes and beliefs in the courts. A surprise finding was – laws introduced into an unwelcoming culture will not be properly upheld. Further, a new framework for understanding reprisals was developed which can be used as a tool for prevention. These findings guide our future research, education and advocacy.

WBC's mission is to improve the practice of whistleblowing, the lives of whistleblowers and Canadians at large, and accountability in Canadian organizations, by sharing knowledge through webinars, conferences, lectures, and training for the benefit of the general public as well as employees, whistleblowers, and employers/leaders in Canadian public and private organizations.

Impact

Since WBC's 2019 founding, demand for our expertise has grown steadily among legislators, regulators, professional associations, academic and legal institutions across Canada and internationally and from individuals seeking help. Here is our track record:

- WBC delivered 15 webinars, organized 2 conferences with support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and helped create a *Canadian Whistleblowing Research Network* reaching hundreds of participants and growing.
- Our research and training are recognized as Continuing Education content by 3 professional associations including the Canadian Bar Association. We are providing continuing education training for legal professionals through a Continuing Education for Professionals company.
- WBC has been invited to participate in 14 panels, conferences and presentations nationally and internationally.
- The *Whistleblower's Tool Kit* has been requested 30 times since its March 2026 launch,
- WBC's Information and Coaching service since 2020 started at a few inquiries a month and have increased to *2 inquiries per week* from whistleblowers navigating disclosure decisions. We wonder how many more remain silent from fear.
- WBC conducted a survey of Ontario lawyers and created a Directory of Lawyers for Whistleblowers, with support from the Law Foundation of Ontario.
- WBC's policy work has included collaboration [on a shadow brief](#) to the UN Human Rights Committee, multiple submissions to Parliament and letters to Parliamentarians.
- WBC has peer reviewed articles for Academic Journals and contributed to books.