

Alberta in running for secrecy award

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The Alberta Government is among the nominees for the fourth annual Code of Silence Award, recognizing the most secretive governments and government agencies in Canada.

The RCMP, Health Canada, the New Brunswick Health Department and Charlottetown city council round out the list of finalists for the dubious honour, to be presented May 8 by the Canadian Association of Journalists.

The Alberta government was singled out for its handling of a freedom of information request involving a defamation suit against former provincial cabinet minister Stockwell Day.

After spending nearly \$800,000 defending Day in the lawsuit, a judge found the province attempted to manipulate public opinion by selectively releasing documents on the government's actions sought under the Freedom of Information Act.

When the Globe and Mail and the opposition Liberals requested more documents, they were told they would each be charged \$60,000. After Justice Terrence McMahon of the Alberta Court of Queens Bench drastically lowered the fees and ordered the government to comply, the Alberta Department of Justice released mainly old newspaper clippings and other documents of little journalistic value.

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