

CASE STUDY

The Federal Accountability Act

Canada's government passed the Federal Accountability Act in December 2006 in response to issues raised by the "sponsorship scandal." These issues included:

- Responsible and **accountable** spending by government.
- Protection for government employees who "blow the whistle" on wrongdoing within Canada's **civil service**.
- More information about the activities of lobbyists. Lobbyists are people paid to represent the interests of particular groups in society. You can read more about them on pages 51 to 53.

Take a look at the news article below. Why did the sponsorship scandal raise issues?

accountable: answerable to someone for your actions; observable, transparent

civil service: the people who serve Canadians as employees of government

Scandalous! Appalling! Watchdog slams government in sponsorship scandal

February 10, 2004

A report by Canada's auditor general today slammed the government for creating a secret fund and using it for its own interests, instead of the interests of all Canadians.

The auditor general is the "watchdog" on government spending for parliament and the people of Canada. Her report came from her investigation into the sponsorship scandal — an investigation launched by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

The investigation concerned a federal fund in Québec that was supposed to pay for cultural events and programs. The investigation found that there was no process for handing the money out, and no accountability for how the money was spent.

The money, it turns out, wasn't being used for cultural events at all. Members of the Liberal party were using it to reward their political friends.

The scandal became public when the *Globe and Mail* newspaper tried to find a copy of a document for which the government had paid more than \$500,000. The newspaper discovered that the document didn't exist.

— Based on research into events, views and perspectives.



CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGE

How might making Canada's government more accountable contribute to good government for all Canadians? What other measures might contribute to good government?

This is Sheila Fraser, the auditor general of Canada at the time of the sponsorship scandal. The auditor general monitors government spending on behalf of parliament and all Canadians. Her report led to a public inquiry, followed by criminal charges against several officials. Three were convicted. No elected officials were found guilty. Because of the scandal, the Liberal party lost seats in the federal election of 2004.

