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# *Fact Sheet*

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## **Improving the Way Access Requests Are Processed**

### **How would government improve the administration of the Access to Information Act?**

The Access to Information Act has not been significantly updated since its implementation in 1983, when government records were predominantly paper-based. Bill C-58 would improve the way government information is provided to Canadians by:

- requiring the proactive publication of information that is of interest to Canadians
- allowing government institutions to work together to process requests more efficiently

In addition, through policy changes, the government institutions would provide written explanations when information is not disclosed to requesters.

### **How would government institutions provide written explanations when information is not disclosed?**

Government institutions would provide requesters with a copy of or link to a plain-language guide that would explain in easy-to-understand terms why exempted or excluded information has been withheld.

### **Weren't fees already eliminated? Why does the bill contain provisions to charge fees?**

In May 2016 the government issued the [Interim Directive on the Administration of the Access to Information Act](#). The Directive waived all access to information fees, apart from the \$5 application fee. The government continues in its commitment to eliminate all fees, other than the \$5 application fee. The authority to prescribe fees by regulation would be retained to allow flexibility if a future review of the act determines that adjustments are required.

### **Updating tools available to institutions**

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat would also lead efforts to update the electronic processing tools that are used by government institutions to prepare responses to requests for information.

**How does the bill improve performance reporting?**

The bill includes clarifications on the tabling and publication of annual reports to Parliament on the administration of the act, specifying that all reports would cover the fiscal year, would be tabled in the first 15 days that the House is sitting in the fall, and would be published online within 30 days of tabling.

**How would institutions share processing services?**

The bill would allow federal institutions within the same Ministerial portfolio for example, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, to enter into an agreement to share the work in processing both access to information and personal information requests, through a single team that supports multiple institutions.