

A Conversation with the Information Commissioner

Anti-Racism Ambassadors Network and
the Interdepartmental Network on Equity
in Employment

December 18, 2025



Information
Commissioner
of Canada

Commissaire
à l'information
du Canada



9 Agents of Parliament

Information Commissioner of Canada

Auditor General of Canada

Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada

Privacy Commissioner of Canada

Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner

Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada

Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada

Parliamentary Budget Officer



Why does access to
information matter?

The Access to Information Act

- ~230k access to information requests made to government institutions
- Requests for various types of information, including:
 - briefing notes on decisions taken at senior executive level
 - immigration files
 - historical documents
 - contracts

The access to information system: An inter-connected ecosystem

Government

Role of leadership

Responsible for the
administration
of the Act

Leads the legislative
review

Institutions

Respond to access to
information requests

Volume of requests
increasing

Resource issues

Requesters

Make access requests
and expect to receive
information in
30 days, as stipulated
under the Act

Interested in
Government's actions
and decisions

Office of the Information Commissioner

Upholds the right of
access to information

Investigates
thousands of
complaints each year

My role and powers

- Carry out confidential investigations into complaints about federal institutions' handling of access requests
- Make orders and recommendations
- Engage with parliamentarians
- Conduct investigations into systemic issues

Transparency: A catalyst for diversity

Accessing information

- Government institutions have 30 calendar days to respond to an access to information request.
- Requests can be made through an [online portal](#).
- To request access to records through the *Access to Information Act*, there is a \$5 application fee.

Tips on filing an access request

- Identify what records you want and who has them
 - Info Source provides a [list of government institutions](#) information holdings, including their classes of records and personal information banks
- Make it clear ‘what’ you want and ‘when’
 - What you are looking for and what time frame you’re interested in
- Be specific
 - It will be easier for the ATIP unit to treat your request
 - Offer to discuss over phone to narrow your focus

How can access to information helps foster diversity in the federal public service?



- Highlight gaps in representation and inclusion
- Ensure accountability
- Support evidence-based recommendations

My office's commitment to accessibility



Resources, such as: [How the OIC can help](#), [How the OIC processes and investigates complaints](#), [Frequently asked questions](#) and [What are the possible outcomes for my complaint?](#)



Conduct investigations by phone, mail or email



[Decision database](#)



[Office of the Information Commissioner's response to the Complainant Consultation](#)

Access to information: You have a role to play

Supporting a modern *Access to Information Act*

- The Act must be reviewed every five years.
- Legislative review is intended to keep the Act up to date.
- You can participate in the [ongoing review](#) of the Act launched last June.

Changes I would like to see building on my previous observations and recommendations



broadening the application to include the Office of the Prime Minister and ministers offices;



subjecting Cabinet confidences to the Act;



limiting the application of certain exemptions, such as section 21, (advice and recommendations) and adding a public interest override provision;



setting out a maximum length of time for consultations needed to respond to access requests.

Access to information is a collective responsibility



- Recognize that public servants are responsible for access, not just ATIP analysts
- Practise responsible stewardship of public information, including [emails](#)
- Promote a culture of transparency

Transparency and access to truthful information are more important than ever

- When institutions are not transparent, or when they communicate in a way that is misleading, it can **undermine trust and allow misinformation to flourish**.
- The **risks are real and tangible**. Citizens may try to fill the void, drawing their own conclusions based on incomplete or inaccurate information
- **Ensuring public access to truthful information isn't just a principle**—it's essential for public safety, informed decisions, and trust in our institutions.

For More Information

Check out the OIC's [activities](#), [publications](#), and [decisions](#)

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