Industry, Science and Hiduston Sciences et Lechnology Canada - Technologie Canada

Access to Information and Privacy Acts

Annual Reports

April 1, 1990 to March 31, 1991

Canada

Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade



Ministre de l'Industrie, des Sciences et de la Technologie et ministre du Commerce extérieur

His Excellency, the Right Honourable Ramon John Hnatyshyn, P.C., C.C., C.M.M., C.D., Q.C. Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada Government House

1 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A1

Your Excellency:

I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency the Annual Reports on the administration of the *Access to Information Act* and the *Frivacy Act* for the period of April 1, 1990 to March 31, 1991, in accordance with Section 72 of the legislation. These reports deal with the Department of Industry, Science and Technology.

Yours sincerely,

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Access to Information and Privacy Acts

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Preface

he Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (Revised Statutes of Canada, Chapter A-1, 1985) were proclaimed into force on July 1, 1983.

The Access to Information Act gives Canadian citizens and permanent residents a broad right of access to information contained in government records subject to certain specific and limited exceptions. The *Privacy Act* extends to individuals the right of access to information about themselves held by the government, again subject to specific and limited exceptions. The law also protects the individual's privacy by preventing others from having access to personal information and gives individuals substantial control over its collection and use.

Section 72 of the *Access to Information Act* and section 72 of the *Privacy Act* require that the head of every government institution shall prepare for submission to Parliament an annual report on the administration of the Acts within the institution during each financial year.

These Annual Reports are intended to describe how Industry, Science and Technology Canada administered its responsibilities in the eighth year of operation of the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act*.

Background on the Department

o better understand the context in which access requests are dealt with, this section presents background information about the department.

The Act of Parliament establishing the Department of Industry, Science and Technology was proclaimed into force on February 23, 1990. The department, which has the applied name Industry, Science and Technology Canada (ISTC), was created by the merging of the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion (DRIE) and the Ministry of State for Science and Technology (MOSST). ISTC's mandate is to act in full partnership with the private sector, the science community and other levels of government to promote international competitiveness and excellence in Canadian industry, science and technology. ISTC's main responsibilities are to:

- develop and promote industry and science policies and programs to build a climate for sustainable, long-term economic growth;
- act as a reasoned advocate within the federal government for the interests of the industrial and scientific communities;
- encourage innovation, technology adoption and research and development (R&D) to improve competitiveness; and
- support efforts of Canadian businesses to expand domestic and international sales.

1. Report on the Access to Information Act

1.1 Organization of Access to Information Act and Privacy Act Activities

An Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) Office oversees the implementation of the ATIP legislation and is staffed on a full-time basis. In order to pursue most effectively management's objective of giving maximum effect to the legislation's provisions, the Office is headed by a Senior Departmental Advisor (often referred to as the *Coordinator*). The Senior Departmental Advisor reports directly to the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), Finance, Personnel and Administration. The ADM must provide the leadership to keep in place an institutional framework and mechanisms for the most objective and balanced policy advice and management/financial support to the ministers through the Deputy Minister. This coincides with the role defined for the ATIP Office. One of its responsibilities is to provide independent advice to senior management on the operation of the legislation and the disposition of access cases.

Other equally important responsibilities of the ATIP Office include the following:

- developing policies, procedures and guidelines for the orderly implementation of the Acts;
- promoting awareness of the legislation to ensure departmental responsiveness to the obligations imposed on the government;
- monitoring departmental compliance with the Acts, regulations, procedures and policies;

- acting as spokesperson for the department in dealings with the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Information and Privacy Commissioners, and other government departments and agencies;
- coordinating activities for maintaining current inventories of departmental information holdings;
- reviewing and approving information collections in accordance with the government's policy on information collections and public opinion research; and
- coordinating the preparation of information for management and parliamentary reports as well as other material that may be required by central agencies.

The administration of the legislation within ISTC has also been facilitated at the branch and regional office level. Major organizational sectors have each appointed a liaison officer (who normally reports to an ADM, Regional Executive Director, etc.) to assist their sector by coordinating activities and providing guidance on the operation of the Acts and departmental directives and procedures. This includes providing assistance to applicants with respect to their questions and requests under the legislation.

1.2 Processing of Formal Requests — Summary

All formal access requests are forwarded to the ATIP Office where they are reviewed for clarity and for conformity with the legislation. Each request is then assigned to an organizational sector of the department, which becomes responsible for locating and retrieving the records containing the information sought, and assists in determining the costs and fees for processing the request.

After a review of the relevant records, the organizational sector is responsible for formulating recommendations on the disposition of the case. These are evaluated by the ATIP Office before a final recommendation is presented by the Office to senior management. Cases are normally disposed of at the level of the ADM, Finance, Personnel and Administration. This departmental review process is intended to provide an effective system of checks and balances in the treatment of *Access to Information Act* requests.

Once a decision has been rendered, the requester is notified by the ATIP Office and the organizational sector arranges to provide access to all disclosable records. The processing of requests is illustrated in Annex A.

1.3 Summary of Activities and Highlights

In 1990-91, the department experienced a slight decrease in the number of requests it received directly. During the period under review ISTC received 79 requests, compared to 90 requests in the previous year — a decrease of 12 percent. In addition, a total of 11 different government institutions consulted ISTC on 22 different cases. This accounted for 22 percent of the ATIP Office's caseload.

The department is the recipient of considerable commercial, technical and financial third-party information and, as in past years, most of the requests received by ISTC were for records containing third-party information. Included are business sales statistics and projections, capital costs, market analyses and strategies, applied technology of industrial plants, customer and supplier lists, and investment plans. While considerable third-party information is of a sensitive nature, ISTC has endeavoured to release as much information as possible consistent with the intent of the law and the severability provisions of section 25 of the Act.

ISTC's efforts to maximize the release of information to the public are reflected in the 1990-91 figures. Taking into account only those cases where the department was able to process the request, information was released either in whole, in part or on an informal basis for 96 percent of cases. Users had access to complete records in 39 percent of these cases. In only two cases was information totally exempt from disclosure. There were no cases where information was totally excluded from disclosure by virtue of sections 68 and 69 of the Act.

There remained instances where the department was prohibited from disclosing information under section 20 of the Act. This section accounts for the majority of exemptions claimed by the department.

The nature and source of information requested often required consultations with third parties or other government institutions. The complexity of these consultations necessitated, in some instances, extensions to the time limit prescribed by section 7 of the Act. Despite this, in almost 64 percent of completed cases a response was provided in 30 or fewer days.

ISTC has endeavoured to work closely with users of the *Access to Information Act* and, in keeping with the spirit of the Act, has treated cases informally whenever possible. Requesters were able to obtain access to information on an informal basis in 7 percent of the completed cases.

Users of the *Access to Information Act* come from the media, academic circles, business sectors, organizations and the general public. In 1990-91, the media accounted for the largest source of requests. Requests from this group increased compared to the previous year. In about 43 percent of the completed cases, the requests originated from the media, while this group initiated 27 percent of the cases 1989-90. As in the previous year, the province of Ontario accounted for the vast majority of requests (73 percent).

The number of complaints registered with the Information Commissioner in 1990-91 concerning actions of the department remained low. Four complaints were carried over from 1989-90 and three new complaints were received in 1990-91. Five complaints were disposed of by the end of the period under review. Of these, three were judged by the Information Commissioner to be non-supportable and two complaints were considered justified. Out of the 79 new cases received in 1990-91, only three requesters filed complaints. Three appeals were filed with the Federal Court, although they were not dealt with by the end of the year.

1.4 Statistical Report — Interpretation and Explanation

Annex B provides a summarized statistical report on the *Access to Information Act* applications dealt with in the period from April 1, 1990 to March 31, 1991. The following provides explanations and interpretations for information contained in this report.

I. Requests under the Access to Information Act

Of the 109 requests dealt with during this reporting period, 79 (72 percent) were new requests while 30 requests (28 percent) were carried forward from the previous year.

While keeping in mind the limitations faced regarding available data, Annex C attempts to categorize the requests completed by ISTC in terms of known affiliations and geographical origin.

The department's statistics also reveal that about 75 percent of completed requests concerned third-party information in some way or other.

II. Disposition of Requests Completed

Of the 109 requests dealt with, 88 (81 percent) were completed during the 1990-91 reporting period. It follows that 21 requests (19 percent) remained to be processed as at March 31, 1991. The completed requests were disposed of in the following manner:

Records All Disclosed — Of the 88 completed requests, the requesters were provided with total access to the relevant records in 22 cases.

Records Disclosed in Part — In another 27 instances, the requesters were granted partial access. The cases where no access could be provided were mostly attributable to situations beyond the control of the department (e.g. requests abandoned, requests transferred or records that did not exist).

Nothing Disclosed (Excluded) — There were no requests for which information could not be disclosed because all of the information was excluded under the Act.

Nothing Disclosed (Exempt) — There were two requests for which information could not be disclosed because all of the information was exempt under the Act.

Transferred — Of the 88 requests completed, three concerned records not under the control of the department. These requests were transferred to the appropriate government institution in accordance with the Act.

Unable to Process — The department was unable to process requests in 11 cases.

Abandoned — Of the completed access requests, 17 were eventually considered abandoned.

Treated Informally — In six cases, it was determined that the information could be released informally rather than through the formal procedures of the Act.

III. Exemptions Invoked

As noted in Annex B, exemptions under sections 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 24 of the *Access to Information Act* were invoked by the department in dealing with its cases. The Annex is intended to show the types of exemptions invoked to deny access. For example, if in one request five different exemptions were used, one exemption under each relevant section would be reported for a total of five. If the same exemption is used several times for the same request, it is reported only once.

IV. Exclusions Cited

The Access to Information Act does not apply to records considered confidences of the Queen's Privy Council pursuant to section 69 of the Act. As in the case of exemptions, Annex B is intended to show the types of exclusions invoked to deny access. For example, if in one request five different exclusions were used, one exclusion under each relevant section would be reported for a total of five. If the same exclusion is used several times for the same request, it is reported only once.

V, VI. Completion Time and Extensions

In 64 percent of completed cases, the department was able to respond within 30 days; 18 percent within 31 to 60 days; 9 percent within 61 to 120 days; and 9 percent took more than 120 days to complete.

VII. Translations

No translations were required in dealing with these requests.

VIII. Method of Access

In 45 cases, the requesters received copies of the material they were seeking. In three cases, access was provided by a combination of copies and examination. In one case, the requester examined the information provided. It should be noted that this category only reflects those requests where information was all disclosed or disclosed in part.

IX. Fees

The fees collected during the reporting period totalled \$796.10. It is the department's practice to waive fees where the total owing per request amounts to less than \$25. As a result, fees were waived in 39 instances and represented the sum of \$350.40

Fees collected in 1990-91 are estimated to represent 0.31 percent of the department's total costs shown below.

X. Costs

Total salary costs associated with *Access to Information Act* activities are estimated at \$225 143.50 for 1990-91. Other costs amounted to \$30 034.04 for a total of \$255 177.54. The associated person-year resources for 199^-91 are estimated at 5.2. Because of the difficulty of collecting complete time costs from responsibility centres, the aforementioned figures are believed to be underestimated.

In keeping with government guidelines, ISTC was consulted by other government institutions in a number of cases (22 in 1990-91) where the records sought from these institutions related to the activities of the department. The cost figures shown above include the resources used in dealing with these cases. However, statistics on these 22 cases are not otherwise reflected in other items of Annex B.

1.5 Special Issues

Complaints to Information Commissioner

Four complaints were carried forward into the 1990-91 reporting year. In addition to these outstanding complaints, three new complaints were initiated in 1990-91.

Of the four complaints carried forward, three were disposed of at the end of 1990-91. These complaints concerned the question of non-disclosure of information. While the Information Commissioner determined that one of the three complaints disposed of was not supportable, the two remaining complaints were considered justified. In both justified cases, the department and the Commissioner did not agree on the interpretation to be given to certain sections of the Act relating to exemptions. As at March 31, 1991, one complaint relating to non-disclosure of information remained under consideration.

There were three complaints initiated in 1990-91, all of which concerned the question of non-disclosure of information. The Information Commissioner ruled that two complaints were not supportable and the other remained under consideration.

Appeals to the Federal Court

One appeal to Federal Court was carried forward into the 1990-91 reporting year and remains outstanding. There were two appeals filed with the Federal Court in 1990-91 and these cases were also not dealt with by the end of the year.

Employee Awareness

The administration of the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act* involves a delicate balancing of rights and interests. This, coupled with the complex character of the legislation, has underlined the importance of employee sensitivity to the obligations imposed on government institutions.

As explained in previous annual reports, considerable efforts have been directed toward preparing departmental staff for the implementation of the Access to Information and Privacy legislation; both before its enactment and afterward. The legislation was widely disseminated throughout the department and a guide was issued to explain, in plain language, the requirements of the legislation. Early efforts to sensitize employees to their responsibilities were undertaken through detailed and frequent seminars which continue to be offered as the need arises. Moreover, all new ISTC employees are provided with a brochure summarizing the features of the legislation and departmental directives and procedures. Departmental awareness is also maintained through the policies and procedures contained in the Access to Information and Privacy Manual. In addition, circulars continue to be issued for reporting on significant cases dealt with by federal Information and Privacy Commissioners and the Federal Court.

Delegation of Authority

Under section 3 of the *Access to Information Act*, the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology is designated head of the government institution for the purposes of the Act. Certain responsibilities have been delegated, pursuant to section 73 of the Act, to departmental officials to provide for some administrative flexibility. Annex D lists the position titles of officials who were empowered to exercise a delegated authority, and includes the relevant sections of the Act.

Fees

The Access to Information Act authorizes fees for certain activities related to the processing of formal requests under the Act. In addition to an application fee of \$5, search, preparation and reproduction charges may apply to various records. Current fees are specified in the Access to Information Regulations. No fees are imposed for reviewing records, administrative overhead or shipping costs. Moreover, in accordance with section 11 of the Act, no fees are charged for the first five hours required to search for a record or prepare any part of it for disclosure.

The \$5 application fee has been refunded when the information requested is available informally without charge.

The Access to Information Act permits the waiver of fees when this is deemed to be in the public interest. In accordance with Treasury Board guidelines, the department has routinely waived fees under \$25. For fees over \$25, the department examines fee waiver requests on a case-by-case basis. In considering such requests, the department has, for example, taken into account costs in processing each access application and the degree of public benefit to be derived from the release of the disclosable information.

As indicated elsewhere in this report, the fees collected by the department represent only 0.31 percent of the legislation's total administration costs.

Reading Rooms

Section 71 of the Act requires government institutions to provide facilities where the public may inspect manuals used by employees of the institution in administering or carrying out programs or activities. In accordance with this section, reading rooms were established by the department at headquarters and in all regional offices in the summer of 1983. Departmental manuals, the department's entries for the *Access Register* and *Personal Information Index*, access request forms and general information for the public on how to exercise their rights under the Act are intended to be available through these facilities.

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2. Report on the Privacy Act

2.1 Organization of Privacy Act Activities

Certain features that were common to the implementation of both the *Access* to *Information Act* and the *Privacy Act* are referred to on page 5.

2.2 Processing of Formal Requests

The processing of formal requests under the *Privacy Act* is the same as the process for the *Access to Information Act* as described on page 6.

2.3 Summary of Activities and Highlights

No new requests were made under the *Privacy Act* in 1990-91. No corrections or notations were sought by requesters pursuant to the terms of the Act. No complaints were filed with the Privacy Commissioner and in no case was there an appeal to the Federal Court of Canada.

The department is the recipient of personal information, including information about employees and other individuals, such as applicants for loans and grants. There is a continued, substantial effort on the part of the department to provide individuals with access to their personal information without formal recourse to the *Privacy Act*.

2.4 Statistical Report — Interpretation and Explanation

Annex E provides a summarized statistical report on the requests for personal information received under the *Privacy Act* which were dealt with in the period from April 1, 1990 to March 31, 1991. The following provides explanations and interpretations for information contained in this report.

I. Requests under the Privacy Act

No requests were received by ISTC during this reporting period. Two requests were carried over from the previous year and were disposed off.

Annex F categorizes, by province of origin, the requests for personal information completed by ISTC.

II. Disposition of Requests Completed

Disclosed in Part — In the two cases, the requesters were granted partial access.

III. Exemptions Invoked

Section 26 was the only exemption invoked.

IV. Exclusions

No exclusions were cited in dealing with these requests.

V. Completion Time

One case was disposed of within 30 days. The other was completed within 60 days.

VI. Extensions

One extension was required under the Act.

VII. Translations

No translations were required in dealing with these requests.

VIII. Method of Access

Copies of the records were given in response to both requests.

IX. Correction and Notation

No requests for a correction or notation were received.

X. Costs

Total salary costs associated with *Privacy Act* activities are estimated at \$24 503.28 for 1990-91. Other costs were estimated at \$3 337.12 for a total cost of \$27 840.40. The associated person-year resources for 1990-91 are estimated at 0.6.

2.5 Special Issues

Complaints to the Privacy Commissioner

No complaints were filed with the Privacy Commissioner in 1990-91.

Appeals to the Federal Court

No appeals were filed in 1990-91 with the Federal Court under the *Privacy Act*.

Employee Awareness

The importance of sensitizing employees to the requirements of the *Privacy Act* has been recognized. See page 11.

Delegation of Authority

Under section 3 of the *Privacy Act*, the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology is designated head of the government institution for the purposes of the Act. Certain responsibilities have been delegated, pursuant to section 73 of the Act, to departmental officials in order to provide for some administrative flexibility. Annex G lists the position titles of officials who were empowered to exercise a delegated authority and includes the relevant sections of the Act.

Exempt Banks

No personal information bank has been designated as exempt in accordance with section 18 of the *Privacy Act*.

Disclosure under paragraph 8(2)(e) of the Privacy Act

Through the department's Access to Information and Privacy Manual, staff have been advised that disclosures of information under paragraph 8(2)(e) are strictly regulated. Any requests for disclosure received under this provision are

referred to the Senior Departmental Advisor of the ATIP Office for review. The Senior Departmental Advisor reviews the request with the senior official in the department responsible for the personal information bank or the personal information class containing the information sought. Disclosures under paragraph 8(2)(e) require the approval of the Senior Departmental Advisor.

Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal information

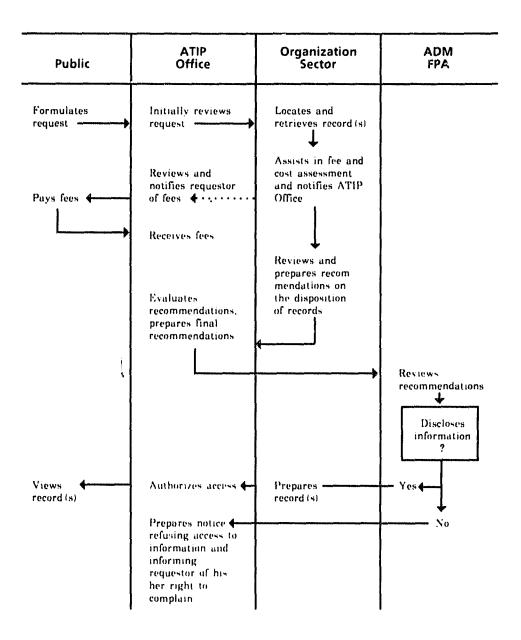
The department's Access to Information and Privacy Manual outlines the intent and requirements of the Privacy Act and Treasury Board guidelines regarding the collection, use, disclosure, retention and disposal of personal information so that all staff will be aware of their responsibilities for the proper management of information holdings. In particular, staff are informed of their responsibilities in ensuring that all uses and disclosures of personal information are recorded and accounted for, by documenting all activities relating to personal information and maintaining the relevant material on official departmental files.

Responsibility centres are also advised to consult with the departmental ATIP Office before collecting any personal information, as well as in situations where there is any doubt concerning which rules to apply in the retention and disposal of personal information.

Further, the Office must be notified where personal information in a personal information bank is used or disclosed for a use consistent with the purpose for which the information was obtained or compiled by the department, but where such a use is not included in the statement of consistent uses published in the government's *Personal Information Index*.

Annex A

Processing Requests for Access to Information



Annex B

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Annex C
Requests completed under the *Access to Information Act*

Affiliation Groups	Number	Percentage of Requests
Media	38	43
Public	33	38
Organization	14	16
Business	2	2
Academia	1	<u>1</u>
Total	88	100

Geographical Origin	Number	Percentage of Requests
Ontario	64	73
Quebec	10	11
Alberta	4	5
Saskatchewan	3	4
New Brunswick	2	2
British Columbia	1	1
Manitoba	1	1
Nova Scotia	1	1
Prince Edward Island	1	1
Northwest Territories	1	<u>1</u>
Total	88	100

Annex D

Delegation of Authority — Access to Information Act

Position	Sections of the Act
Associate Deputy Minister	11(1)(b), 11(2), 11(3), 11(4), 11(5), 11(6), 12(2), 13(1), 13(2), 14, 15, 16(1), 16(2), 16(3), 17, 18, 19(1), 19(2), 20(1), 20(2), 20(3), 20(5), 20(6), 21, 22, 23, 24(1), 26, 27, 28(1), 28(5)(a), 28(5)(b), 28(6), 28(8), 29(1)(b), 37(4), 43(1)
Assistant Deputy Minister Finance, Personnel and Administration	11(1)(b), 11(2), 11(3), 11(4), 11(5), 11(6), 12(2), 13(1), 13(2), 14, 15, 16(1), 16(2), 16(3), 17, 18, 19(1), 19(2), 20(1), 20(2), 20(3), 20(5), 20(6), 21, 22, 23, 24(1), 26, 27, 28(1), 28(5)(a), 28(5)(b), 28(6), 28(8), 29(1)(b), 37(4), 43(1)
Senior Departmental Advisor Access to Information and Privacy Office	7(a), 8(1), 9, 11(1)(b), 11(2), 11(3), 11(4), 11(5), 11(6), 12(2), 20(3), 28(1), 28(4), 28(5)(a), 28(6), 28(8), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b), 33, 37(4), 43(1), 44(2)
Advisor Access to Information and Privacy Office	7(a), 8(1), 9, 11(1)(b), 11(2), 11(3), 11(4), 11(5), 11(6), 12(2), 20(3), 28(1), 28(4), 28(5)(a), 28(6), 28(8), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b), 33, 37(4), 43(1), 44(2)

Annex E

Government of Canada

Gouvernement du Canada

REPORT ON THE PRIVACY ACT RAPPORT CONCERNANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS

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8 Art 27								
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Annex F
Requests Completed under the *Privacy Act*

Provinces of Origin	Number	Percentage of Requests
Quebec	1	50
Ontario	_1	<u>50</u>
Total	2	100

Annex G

Delegation of Authority — Privacy Act

Position	Sections of the Act
Associate Deputy Minister	8(2)(<i>m</i>), 17(2), 18(2), 19(1), 19(2), 20, 21, 22(1), 22(2), 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28
Assistant Deputy Minister Finance, Personnel and Administration	8(2)(<i>m</i>), 17(2), 18(2), 19(1), 19(2), 20, 21, 22(1), 22(2), 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28
Senior Departmental Advisor Access to Information and Privacy Office	8(5), 14(<i>a</i>), 15, 17(2)
Advisor Access to Information and Privacy Office	8(5), 14(<i>a</i>), 15, 17(2)