Treasury Board of Canada
Secretariat

Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor
du Canada

Canada

Key Actions on Access to Information

Key actions on access to information

Below is a list of key actions, implemented, planned or underway, to improve access to information and transparency. These actions do not require any legislative amendments and address concerns and feedback raised previously by the Information Commissioner and by stakeholders in the context of the Access to Information (ATI) Review.

This work is in addition to the ongoing work of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) in terms of supporting and providing policy advice and guidance to more than 265 federal institutions in respect of the administration of the *Access to Information Act*.

Date	Actions	Improvements	Benefits
Fall 2022	TBS issued implementation guidance to help address challenges identified around inter-institutional consultations.	- Strengthening the Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) community - Access to Information (ATI) services - Processes and timeliness	Improves the efficiency of inter-institutional consultation on ATI requests to help reduce delays resulting from this process.

Date	Actions	Improvements	Benefits
Fall 2022	**TBS will develop government-wide training tools** to support the Access to Information and Privacy communities.	• Strengthening the ATIP community • ATI services • Processes and timeliness	Will help increase the capacity of ATIP offices to provide access to government information in a timely manner.
Summer 2022	TBS concluded an <u>evaluation assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of proactive publication</u> under the *Access to Information Act*.	• Strengthening the ATIP Community • Transparency • Processes and timeliness	The evaluation has provided recommendations to improve the proactive publication process and increase the efficiency of proactive publication processes within institutions.

Date	Actions	Improvements	Benefits
Summer 2022	In July 2022, improved user experience of the <u>Access to Information and Personal Information Online Request Service (AORS)</u>. The new features allow requesters to: • sign into a secure website to make ATIP requests, using two-factor authentication • have an account where their basic information is saved so they do not have to re-enter it every time they make a request • track the status of all their requests through their own dashboard; and, • receive their completed request responses through the AORS AORS allows institutions to: • send completed requests directly to the requester through ATIP Online, avoiding CD-ROMs, paper and mail	• ATI services • Processes and timeliness	Secure accounts allow users to submit requests without having to repeatedly provide the same information. Users can receive responses to their request electronically through the same platform used to submit it.

Date	Actions	Improvements	Benefits
Summer 2022	In July 2022, the <u>Policy on Access to Information</u> and <u>Directive on Access to Information Requests</u> came in effect. These updated policy instruments have been published on the TBS website and reflect the legislative changes made to the *Access to Information Act* in 2019.	- Strengthening the ATIP community - ATI services	Helps improve consistency of TBS policy suite following legislative changes and codify best practices for the ATIP community.

Date	Actions	Improvements	Benefits
Spring 2022	TBS launched a renewal of the Standard on Metadata. A symposium on Metadata was held with participants and panelists from government, academia and private sector. The event was intended to understand the current environment on metadata and begin to shape the policy direction. The objective of the renewal is to develop a new Standard that will ensure metadata-related requirements for both information and data are updated to reflect current and future information and data management practices and technologies. It is anticipated that the new Standard will take effect in Summer 2023.	• Strengthening the ATIP community • Processes and timeliness	Metadata ensures information and data can be well managed and enables the FAIR principles for information and data (findable, accessible, interoperable and re-useable). It will help improve efficiency in retrieving records in response to ATI requests. It will also provide for a consistent approach to metadata and metadata application and management across the government.

Date	Actions	Improvements	Benefits
Spring 2022	**TBS launched the Access to Information and Privacy Community Development Office** (APCDO) to support the Access to Information and Privacy communities in 2022-23. The APCDO will support ongoing external recruitment activities, as well as retention, training and professional development.	• Strengthening the ATIP community • Transparency • ATI services • Processes and timeliness	Helps develop a strong community of Access to Information and Privacy professionals across Government of Canada to uphold the right of access to information and privacy for Canadians.
Spring 2022	As of June 2022, summaries of completed ATI requests are published every 30 days on the Open Government portal and remain publicly available, a change to the previous practice of removing summaries after a period of two years.	• Transparency	Users are able to search an increasing volume of summaries of ATI requests.

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Spring 2022	TBS and Public Services Procurement Canada have completed a competitive request for proposal process to establish contracting vehicles to allow for **a new ATIP request processing software**. TBS will support the implementation of the new request processing software by Government of Canada institutions to ensure a streamlined approach across government.	• Strengthening the ATIP community • ATI services • Processes and timeliness	Updated technologies improve service delivery in responding to access to information requests.
Spring 2022	TBS developed a **new Standard on Systems that Manage Information and Data which came into effect in May 2022**. The standard takes a principles and outcomes-based approach to the management of information and data across the Government of Canada.	• Strengthening the ATIP community • Processes and timeliness	Robust information management systems help ensure that information and data are well-managed and can be made available through access to information requests.

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Winter 2022	**TBS launched an external recruitment exercise** to create a pool of qualified candidates to address existing resource pressures across the government. Following this exercise, TBS launched a pre-qualified ATIP Professionals pool in Summer 2022.	• Strengthening the ATIP community • Processes and timeliness	Helps increase institutions' ATIP processing capacity by adding new ATIP professionals from both inside and outside the public service.
Winter 2022	TBS released guidance to federal institutions to streamline the review process before proactive publication.	• Transparency • Processes and timeliness	Helps increase the efficiency of proactive publication processes within institutions by streamlining the review prior to publication.
Winter 2022	The Chief Information Officer of Canada sent correspondence to deputy heads to remind them of their legal obligations under the *Access to Information Act* as they plan for return to workplaces, and to signal the expectation that access to information is considered among critical services in business continuity planning.	• ATI services • Processes and timeliness	Helps ensure plans are in place to address ATI request backlogs and that the legal obligations of the *Access to Information Act* are fully met, including in more challenging contexts.

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Winter 2022	TBS and the Canada School of Public Service co-sponsored a digital event that showcased innovative digital tools that can help facilitate the processing of ATI requests.	- Strengthening the ATIP community - ATI services - Processes and timeliness	Helps increase the efficiency of institutions in responding to ATI requests through the use of innovative digital tools.
Summer 2021	TBS trained more than 500 data publishers within federal organizations and in the Open Government, Access to Information, Information Management and Technology communities. The focus was on improving data quality, web accessibility for data, and application programming interfaces to publish and consume open data. This training reduced the number of documents that required large-scale changes for accessibility purposes, which made the publication more efficient.	- Strengthening the ATIP community - Transparency - ATI services - Processes and timeliness	Helps ensure Canadians have access to quality data that is easily understandable and consumable.

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Spring 2021	In April 2021, **Budget 2021 committed $12. 8 million** (on an accrual basis, $14. 2 million cash) to support improvements to the Access to Information and Privacy Online Request service, to accelerate the proactive release of information to Canadians on the Open Government portal, to enhance performance monitoring and reporting and to complete the ATI Review.	• Strengthening the ATIP community • Transparency • ATI services • Processes and timeliness	Increases the government's capacity to advance initiatives related to access to information.
Winter 2021	TBS engaged more than twenty federal institutions to update the ATI summaries template used for publication to the Open Government Portal. The updated template was implemented in April 2021.	• Strengthening the ATIP community • ATI services	The updated reporting template facilitated data entry and improved data quality, official languages compliance as well as the searchability and discoverability of ATI summaries data on the portal.

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Summer 2020	In July 2020, TBS engaged federal institutions in workshops to share the digital ATI processes in place at various institutions, including practices in place at Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Infrastructure Canada.	- Strengthening the ATIP community - ATI services - Processes and timeliness	The workshops supported institutions in their capacity to continue processing ATI requests remotely during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
Summer 2020	TBS engaged 300 public servants in June 2020 on guidance for proactively releasing information and data on the Open Government portal. This engagement helped to increase the internal awareness of the tools available for institutions to publish even more open information and open data.	- Strengthening the ATIP community - Transparency	Enabled users in obtaining information that is easily accessible and provided in the official language of their choice.

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Spring 2020	The *Policy on Service and Digital* and *Directive on Service and Digital* took effect on April 1, 2020, requiring that employees document activities and decisions of business value so that this information is available, including to Canadians through ATI requests. TBS issued additional guidance to employees on the importance of managing government information while working remotely.	• Transparency • Processes and timeliness	The duty to document helps ensure that records of key government decisions and activities are available through access to information requests. Facilitates retrieval of records to support timely responses to requests.

Date	Actions	Improvements	Benefits
Ongoing	The APCDO contributes to the development and sustainability of the ATI and Privacy communities via recruitment, retention, learning, networking, and partnership activities with a spirit of diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility through community engagement.	- Strengthening the ATIP community - ATI services - Processes and timeliness	Helps enhance the capacity of ATIP offices to provide Canadians with access to government information in a timely manner by attracting new talents to the ATIP offices and providing ATIP professionals with centralized training and professional development programs.
Ongoing	Public Safety Canada, in collaboration with the National Security and Intelligence (NSI) community, Library and Archives Canada, and TBS, is spearheading a declassification initiative that includes: the creation of an Interdepartmental Declassification Working Group responsible for	- Strengthening the ATIP community - Transparency - ATI services - Processes and timeliness	Through the declassification initiative, the government aims to promote transparency and improve access to national security-related information. This will foster a better understanding of activities undertaken by the NSI community.

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	providing advice on the proactive declassification of historical NSI records on an ongoing basis • the development of a draft NSI declassification framework, which provides guidance on a consistent and coordinated approach to declassifying historical NSI records proactively across the community • pilot launched in October 2021 to review high priority records against the draft framework • planned consultations with domestic and foreign stakeholders to inform the draft framework and future declassification proposals and plans		

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