

for benefits of some kind. This type of measure, with its attendant rights and safeguards, protects individuals by ensuring that they are not subjected to uncontrolled and unaccountable bureaucratic whim.

The 1980 Report of the Ontario Commission on Freedom of Information and Individual Privacy (the Williams Commission) made the following observation:

"The essence of the informational privacy problem is the loss by individuals of control over the use and dissemination of information concerning their personal lives. The informational privacy value is depreciated when individuals are required to disclose information to another person or institution, and by a loss of control over subsequent uses made of that information. A privacy protection policy intended to preserve informational privacy would therefore attempt to restrict personal data-gathering activity to that which appears to be necessary to meet legitimate social objectives and would attempt to maximize the control that individuals are able to exert over subsequent use and dissemination of information surrendered to institutional record keepers."⁷

Turning the lofty goals of open government and privacy protection into a reality is not easy; it also costs money. The Treasury Board has estimated the annual cost of implementing the Acts to be over \$8.4 million.⁸ However, these figures must be placed in context. How much does the Government of Canada spend in communicating the information of its choice to the people of Canada? The Treasury Board has indicated to the Committee that in 1984-85 there were 1,330 professional information services officers on the government payroll whose primary function involved communications. The total salary cost was \$49.6 million. Advertising, printing, publishing, and so forth involved an actual expenditure in 1984-85 of \$289 million. These figures do not include communications expenditures by regional offices of the Government of Canada.⁹

Considering the importance attached by Canadians to open government and the protection of privacy,¹⁰ the cost of implementing the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act* has not been excessive. This point is reinforced when the costs incurred in administering both Acts is compared with what the Government spends in communicating information of its choice. In addition, experience in other jurisdictions with freedom of information legislation has demonstrated that requests for information sometimes unearth inappropriate spending practices which, when changed, save the taxpayers millions of dollars. Both Acts have had a salutary effect on government record-keeping, leading to greater efficiency and consequent reductions in public expenditures.

The Honourable John Crosbie set out the Government's commitment to effective Access and Privacy legislation when he told the Committee that:

"Access to Information and Privacy legislation is an area of compelling significance in a free and democratic society such as ours and the government is firmly committed to the basic principles that are the underpinnings of our laws."¹¹

The Committee takes the spirit of both Acts—that they extend rights—as its point of departure. We have reviewed the provisions and operation of both Acts with a view to evaluating what has been achieved in the first three years of their operation. Our review has also enabled us to identify a number of emerging and parallel issues which are now beyond the scope of the Acts in their present form but which must be addressed. (See Appendix A for our recommendations.) Other issues concerning technical matters of lesser importance and apparent conflicts between the English and French versions of particular provisions of both Acts are not dealt with in this Report.