

The Senior Advisor and Co-ordinator, Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP), reports to the Associate Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs. The Co-ordinator's Office is responsible for the development, co-ordination and implementation of effective policies, guidelines and procedures to manage the Department of External Affairs' compliance with the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act. The Office also serves as the Department's point of contact for the Registration of Information Collection and Public Opinion Research. In addition, it is responsible for the screening of inactive departmental files prior to their transfer to the National Archives.

The ATIP Office has a complement of four officers and three support staff, all of whom are dedicated to ATIP and related functions on a full-time basis. All requests to the Department of External Affairs under the Access to Information and Privacy Acts submitted within Canada or at Canadian missions abroad are replied to by the Office of the Co-ordinator in Ottawa. On occasion, the processing of a request entails retrieving requested records or obtaining information from missions abroad, a process which can take a number of weeks.

The Canadian Government holds records and information received in confidence from foreign governments. As a result, the Office is responsible for consultations with foreign governments. Such consultations are normally undertaken through posts abroad and are usually completed in six to eight weeks. Also, other federal government institutions are encouraged to solicit the assistance of External Affairs in determining the extent to which documents were obtained in confidence and the extent to which disclosure of information would prejudice international affairs. Third party consultations are undertaken on a regular basis, as the Department collects an appreciable amount of commercial information from companies operating abroad or dealing with foreign governments. Requests by foreign governments regarding the declassification and disclosure of Canadian documents are also processed by the Office.