

The Senior Advisor and Coordinator, Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP), has been designated with full authority to exercise the powers of the Access and Privacy Acts. The Coordinator's Office is responsible for the development, coordination 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. All requests to the Department of External Affairs under the Access to Information Act and Privacy Act submitted within Canada or at Canadian missions abroad are replied to by the Office of the Coordinator in Ottawa. The Coordinator reports to the Legal Advisor. In addition to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Coordinator, the Deputy Minister for International Trade, the Assistant Deputy Minister for Political and International Affairs, and the Legal Advisor are also designated with full powers, and all Heads of Mission are designated to act under Section 8(2)(m) (personal benefit) of the Privacy Act.

The Canadian Government holds records and information received in confidence from foreign governments. Other federal government institutions are encouraged to solicit the assistance of External Affairs in determining the extent to which documents were obtained in confidence or the extent to which disclosure of information would be injurious to the conduct of international affairs. The Coordinator's Office is responsible for consultations with foreign governments which are normally undertaken through Canadian posts abroad. Requests by foreign governments regarding the declassification and disclosure of Canadian documents are also processed by the Office. The Department also collects, under various legislative authorities or otherwise, an appreciable amount of commercial information in confidence from companies operating abroad or dealing with foreign governments. In the event of requests for such information, the Department, if it determines it has no substantive interest in the information, will undertake appropriate notification or consultation with interested parties before disclosing any records. The Coordinator's Office also has frequent occasion to convey personal information to federal investigative agencies.

A significant change in the number and composition of the Access Requests occurred as a result of the transfer in September 1992 of responsibility for the delivery abroad of the Immigration Program from this department to CEIC. Because Immigration files at missions abroad were henceforth no longer under the control of the Department, the Coordinator's Office no longer continued to receive the Access requests for such files, which had become a statistically significant proportion of the overall case load. Notifications were sent in advance to the large numbers of frequent requestors for immigration-related records of the change in Departmental responsibilities; as a result, the transition seems to have been effected smoothly.