

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. The Office serves as the Department's point of contact for the Registration of Information Collection and Public Opinion Research. It is responsible for the screening of inactive departmental files prior to their transfer to the National Archives. The Coordinator reports to the Legal Advisor. The Deputy Minister for International Trade and the Assistant Deputy Minister for International Affairs 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 ATIP Office has a complement of three officers and three support staff, all of whom are dedicated to Access/Privacy and related functions on a full-time basis. Budgetary restraints and downsizing of the department has not allowed additional resources to be provided to the ATIP function despite the continuing growth in requests. 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 Coordinator in Ottawa.

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.