

PART I

POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Openness in Government

The purpose of this document is to familiarize members of the Department of External Affairs with the aims and provisions of the new Access to Information and Privacy Acts. The provisions are of far-reaching significance as they fundamentally change the legal framework within which government institutions have operated in the past.

The aim of the legislation is to provide a right of access to information in records under the control of any department, ministry or state of the government of Canada, or any body or office listed in the Act in accordance with the principles that ¹government information should be available to the public, that ²necessary exemptions should be limited and specific, and that ³decisions on disclosure of government information should be reviewed independently of government.

Informal and Formal Requests for Information

The Access to Information Act is intended to complement, rather than replace, existing procedures for access to government information. It is departmental policy to encourage to the fullest extent feasible the use of informal channels for seeking information available to the public. Dissemination of such information will continue to be handled in the usual manner through press releases, departmental publications, etc.