OFFICE OF THE INFORMATION & PRIVACY COMMISSIONER FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

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News Release

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Canada's information regulators call for action to help capacity-constrained small public bodies uphold access to information rights

Gatineau, Québec – Canada's information regulators are calling on governments to better equip small public bodies to meet their access to information obligations, and for those bodies to build transparency into their work.

Canada's Federal, Provincial and Territorial Information Commissioners and Ombuds responsible for overseeing access to information adopted a joint resolution, *Enhancing Access to Information Held by Small Public Bodies*, at their annual meeting in Ottawa on September 15, 2026.

The resolution underscores the vital role of small public bodies in upholding democratic accountability across Canada. Small public bodies – including some municipalities, schools, police boards and many more – oversee matters that must be subject to public scrutiny, including zoning decisions, environmental assessments, public safety initiatives, and by-law enforcement. However, they often operate without the staff, funding, expertise, and technology they need to meet their access to information obligations, leading to delays, inconsistent practices, and other barriers for people requesting information.

The regulators noted that individuals' right to access public records should not be limited by the size and capacity constraints of the public body.

The resolution calls on governments to provide small public bodies with the resources, training and digital tools they need to satisfy access requests; promote modern records management and provide practical support to facilitate networking and shared-service models; as well as to ensure fees do not create barriers to timely access.

Small public bodies are called on to design their programs to be transparent by default and expand their proactive disclosure of records; establish sound records management and invest in staff training; collaborate and share resources with other public bodies; and provide meaningful assistance to applicants throughout the request process.

The regulators committed to supporting small public bodies through guidance, education and outreach; encouraging collaboration; identifying emerging challenges; and advocating for the legislative, policy and operational measures needed to keep access to information "meaningful, effective and accessible for all Canadians."

Quote from the Information Commissioner of Canada:
"Canadians have a right to timely access to government information, and public institutions need the capacity to meet that expectation. While institutions of all sizes face growing demands, smaller agencies often operate with very limited resources and expertise. A few access requests can have a significant impact on teams where employees wear many hats and carry multiple responsibilities. This resolution recognizes those challenges and underscores the importance of ensuring institutions have the support they need to uphold Canadians' right of access to information." **Caroline Maynard, Information Commissioner of Canada**

Quote from BC Information and Privacy Commissioner
"Small public bodies are modest in size, but they have an outsize impact on how people experience democratic accountability. They often hold the records that matter most to people where they live – in their homes, their communities. When those records are delayed or inaccessible due to capacity constraints, the public's trust in the institutions that serve them erodes. This resolution offers a path forward to help rebuild that trust by strengthening small public bodies' capacity to meet their access obligations, while making transparency a key part of the work they do every day." **Michael Harvey, Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia.**

Related documents:
Joint resolution: Enhancing Access to Information Held by Small Public Bodies

News release: Canada's information and privacy regulators collaborate to advance transparency, privacy and accountability amid rapid technological change

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