



PRESS RELEASE
September 29, 2014

ATIPPA Review Committee releases summary of access coordinators' questionnaire

In response to the Review Committee's request, nearly one third of the province's Access to Information coordinators shared their views of aspects of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act [ATIPPA]* in confidential research undertaken by the independent review committee. A summary of the answers to the questionnaire was released today by the Committee. Some of the results are listed below. A full summary report is attached.

DOES THE PUBLIC BODY REGARD ATIPPA TIMELINES AS GUIDES, OR ABSOLUTE DEADLINES?

Of the 115 responses, more than half had mixed views (31) or said their public body views the timelines as guides, rather than absolute deadlines (28). 46 said their public body regards the timelines as absolute deadlines for providing information. 10 didn't answer.

DO EMPLOYEES IN YOUR PUBLIC BODY HAVE A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THE ATIPPA?

More than half of the coordinators reflected concern about the knowledge public servants have about the access and protection of privacy law. 39 said they had mixed views on the subject, and 22 stated that employees in their public body didn't have a good understanding of the law. 42 reported that employees in their public body have a good understanding of the access law.

ARE ALL NEW EMPLOYEES HELPED TO GET A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THE ATIPPA?

More than half of coordinators either felt new employees weren't getting a good understanding of the law (33) or had mixed views (25). 46 coordinators reported new hires were being helped to get a good understanding of the law.

PERSONAL COMMENTS NOT BEING RELEASED

As part of this questionnaire, coordinators were also asked to share any personal opinions they held regarding their positions as coordinators and how the *ATIPPA* functions. Many did so. The Committee felt it could only get such views if it assured coordinators that their responses to the questionnaires would be handled in a manner that would protect their identities.

"Coordinators play a pivotal role in enabling citizens to access information," said Committee Chair Clyde Wells, "and it was necessary to hear what they had to say. We also felt that unless we promised anonymity, coordinators might be apprehensive about answering in a full and frank manner."

To avoid any possibility of identification, the Committee is releasing the answers to the questionnaire in a summary form only. Apart from the commitment made by the Committee, several coordinators explicitly asked that their views be held in confidence. Under sections 20 and 30 of the *ATIPPA*, several provisions protect personal information, opinions and consultations involving employees from disclosure. The Committee is withholding the additional comments under those sections of the Act.

The Committee has utilized the responses to guide further research into areas around time delays and their root causes, as well as fees and the role and position of access coordinators.

The Committee was established by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to conduct an independent review of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, including amendments made under Bill 29. Committee members are Clyde Wells (Chair), Jennifer Stoddart and Doug Letto.

Media Contact:

Virginia Connors, CAO

E-mail: virginiaconnors@parcnl.ca

Telephone: 709-729-2673 / Toll Free: 1-844-729-2605