

**Department of Justice Progress Report on  
Governance – Access and Privacy**

Mr. Speaker, our government has committed in its mandate to improve access to information and the protection of privacy, which includes taking a number of steps. Today I would like to provide an update on this work, starting off with information on the comprehensive review of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

The main purpose of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* is to make government departments and other public bodies more accountable to the public and to protect personal privacy. The Act gives all members of the public the legal right to request information held by public bodies, and to request a correction of their personal information. The legislation sets out when a public body may collect, use and disclose personal information, and when refusals to disclose records can occur. Finally, under the Act the NWT Information and Privacy Commissioner has the independent authority to review decisions that are made, including how a public body has collected, used or disclosed personal information.

Since the Act came into effect in 1996, there have been a number of changes in Canadian policies, practices and legislation related to access to information or protection of privacy. Changes were made to the Act in 2004 and again in 2005 to respond to issues that had been raised either in our Assembly, by the Privacy Commissioner or by those who use this legislation in their day-to-day activities. However, the environment in which our access and privacy regime operates continues to evolve, and it is clear that further changes are required to the Act to respond to changes in technology and a variety of other issues.

In the initial phase of the comprehensive review of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the Department of Justice conducted extensive research into access and privacy legislation in other provinces and territories, and undertook a detailed examination of our current legislation. Based on this research, and considering the issues previously raised, the Department reached out to other government departments, public bodies, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the public to get their views. The results were consolidated in the “what we heard” report which was released last November. These results, along with our research, are informing the development of a proposal for amendments to the Act. This proposal will be completed this spring.

Our mandate commitment to improve access and privacy rights includes the creation of a GNWT privacy framework. The purpose of this framework is to provide government departments with the tools and structure that they need to administer the privacy protections in the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* consistently and fairly. The framework builds on existing work – bringing together tools, practices and policies that we already have.

This spring, in collaboration with other GNWT departments, the Department of Justice will complete the development of the framework. Once the framework and management programs are completed they will be rolled out to all staff. Staff will receive training so that they are aware of privacy requirements in the legislation, and understand their role in protecting personal information.

The GNWT has also made a mandate commitment to create online access to information and protection of privacy training. This training is aimed at employees in GNWT departments as well as other public bodies. Upon completion of this short online course, staff will have a better understanding of the Act, their obligations in relation to protection of privacy, the rights of residents to make an access request, and a number of simple steps that employees can take to protect the records and personal information they handle.

The Department of Justice currently provides this level of training face-to-face. The online course will not replace that training entirely, but it will make the information more accessible. It will also build awareness of privacy requirements in anticipation of more detailed training during the implementation of the privacy framework. The Department of Justice is currently testing this training, and plans to launch it on the Justice website in March.

Before I complete my remarks today I want to mention the *GNWT Activity Report on the Administration of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. This annual report provides statistical information on the volume of access requests received by GNWT departments, the timeliness of the responses and other matters related to administration of the Act. For those who are interested, the 2016 version of this report is currently available on the Department of Justice website.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I just want to say that progress on these initiatives is a strong indication of this government's commitment to improving access to information and protection of privacy. I look forward to providing further information as these projects advance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.