



OFFICE OF THE
INFORMATION &
PRIVACY COMMISSIONER
for British Columbia

Protecting privacy. Promoting transparency.

Statement

May 10, 2016

**Statement from B.C. Privacy Commissioner
regarding access to information reforms within government**

VICTORIA—Elizabeth Denham, Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia, released the following statement in response to directives Minister of Finance and Government House Leader, and the Minister responsible for the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, Michael de Jong announced yesterday regarding access to information reform:

“I am pleased to see the significant expansion of proactive disclosure and improvements to access to information and information management processes that Minister de Jong announced yesterday. These initiatives will provide an improvement for British Columbians and demonstrate a renewed respect for the spirit of our freedom of information legislation.

“The proactive disclosure of records promotes transparency while being more efficient, since it is a practical way to get high value information to citizens without a freedom of information request. The immediate plans and future commitments to release contracts, ministers’ and deputy ministers’ calendars and receipted travel expenses fulfill recommendations I have made and I support them.

“Most importantly, the public release of this information contributes to satisfying the expectations of citizens with respect to transparency in the expenditure of public funds. Once the Province has delivered all of the announced commitments, British Columbia will resume its position of leadership in Canada in access to information.

“The only announcement that I believe warrants further study relates to the disclosure of details of active freedom of information requests on the Open Information website. I wish to examine all possible implications, including any unintended consequences, of publicly disclosing a description of an applicant’s request for records before they have received those records.

“As a result of my investigation report *Access Denied*, there was a clear need for improvements to some of the processes the government employs in responding to freedom of information requests. I am pleased that the government has implemented a number of improvements, including increased training on records management, privacy, and the handling of requests; and initiatives to increase timeliness and responsiveness.

I also welcome Minister de Jong's support for implementing a legislated duty to document.

"I am encouraged to see that the *Information Management Act* will come into force today. The new legislation provides a modern framework for records management within government that recognizes the modern digital age in which we live.

"These measures are a significant step forward in improving transparency and access to information for the citizens of British Columbia. They give information rights the priority and import that British Columbians expect."

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