

News release

Canada's access to information and privacy guardians urge governments to modernize legislation to better protect Canadians

GATINEAU, QC, November 6, 2019 – Information and Privacy Ombudspersons and Commissioners from across Canada are urging their governments to modernize access to information and privacy laws.

In a joint resolution, Canada's access to information and privacy guardians note that along with its many benefits, the rapid advancement of technologies has had an impact on fundamental democratic principles and human rights, including access to information and privacy. They further point out that Canadians have growing concerns about the use and exploitation of their personal information by both government and private businesses.

“Most Canadian access and privacy laws have not been fundamentally changed since their passage, some more than 35 years ago,” the resolution says. “They have sadly fallen behind the laws of many other countries in the level of privacy protection provided to citizens.”

While there have been legislative advances made in some Canadian jurisdictions, work is still required to ensure modern legislation is in place across the country in order to better protect Canadians.

The resolution notes that privacy and access to information are fundamental to self-determination, democracy and good government. It calls for:

- a legislative framework to ensure the responsible development and use of artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies
- all public and private sector entities engaged in handling personal information to be subject to privacy laws
- Enforcement powers, such as legislating order-making powers and the power to impose penalties, fines or sanctions
- the right of access should apply to all information held by public entities, regardless of format

Canada's Information and Privacy Commissioners and Ombudspersons reaffirmed their commitment to collaborate, make recommendations to government, and to continue to study and make public how access and privacy laws impact all Canadians.

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