

**April 22, 2020**

**Statement from BC's Information and Privacy Commissioner on  
freedom of information during the COVID-19 pandemic**

**VICTORIA—** The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted individuals, families and communities across British Columbia. It has also significantly interfered with the operations of our governments and businesses. I recognized the adjustments public bodies were having to make when I decided on March 18, 2020 to allow an additional 30 days to process freedom of information requests. The decision covered requests made between March 1, 2020 and April 30, 2020.

While public bodies undoubtedly continue to face challenges to ordinary operation, they have had several weeks to develop new ways of carrying out their public obligations, including responding to freedom of information requests. To accommodate the completion of this transition, I am extending my decision to capture requests made between May 1 and 15, 2020.

This decision is consistent with actions taken by many of my colleagues globally, who have supported a flexible approach, taking into account the compelling public interest in responding effectively to the current health emergency while safeguarding the accountability and transparency values underlying the right to information. My decision is also consistent with the need for public bodies to keep good records in what will undoubtedly be an intensely analyzed period of history. We expect that public bodies across the province share this vision.

The staff of the OIPC join all British Columbians in expressing our deep gratitude and appreciation for all of those working tirelessly to manage the pandemic, especially those on the frontlines of the outbreak.

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