

October 9, 2026

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Statutory Review 2025
2nd Floor, Beothuck Building
20 Crosbie Place
St. John's, NL A1B 3Y8

Via email: ATIPPARReview@gov.nl.ca

RE: City of Corner Brook's Comments on the Statutory Review of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015

The City of Corner Brook appreciates the opportunity to participate in the 2025 Statutory review of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015. The City recognizes that access to information is a fundamental democratic right that promotes transparency, accountability and public confidence in governmental operations. Equally important is the protection of personal information entrusted to public bodies. The City fully supports the objectives of the legislation and ascertains that both access to information and privacy protection should continue to be preserved. The City welcomes this statutory review and submits it is necessary due to the evolvement of technology, information management, public expectation and the increasing volume and complexity of records maintained by public bodies.

The recommendations obtained in the submission are therefore offered with the intent of maintaining the public's right of access while ensuring the legislation reflects the realities of daily governance, financial and operational limitations and takes into consideration the impact on those working in the public sector responsible for meeting the deadlines, obligations and all other statutory requirements of the legislation.

The City respectfully asks that the Committee consider these recommendations together with the experiences of municipalities, and other public bodies and stakeholders, throughout Newfoundland and Labrador when developing its findings and future recommendations for legislative reform.

Participation in the Legislative Review Process

The City of Corner Brook intends to continue participating throughout the legislative review process and, where available, welcomes the opportunity to participate in public hearings, consultations, stakeholder engagement sessions, and any further opportunities for public body input established by the Committee.

Given the operational realities faced by municipalities, the City's position is that direct engagement with local governments throughout the review process is essential to ensure that future amendments to ATIPPA remain practical and reflective of the realities faced by public bodies responsible for administering the legislation.

Continuation of the City's previous 2020 submission

The City respectfully submits that the recommendations and concerns previously advanced by the City during the 2020 statutory review remain relevant and should continue to be considered by the Committee. Accordingly, the City requests that its present submission be read in conjunction with, and as an extension of, its previous submissions made during the 2020 statutory review process. Where recommendations from the previous review remain unaddressed, the City continues to support their consideration and implementation.

Need for Greater Balance and Independent Review Within the Legislative Framework

As part of the 2020 Statutory Review, the City of Corner Brook recommended reconsideration of the use of the term "advocate" within section 3(2)(f)(i) of the Act. The City continues to believe that this recommendation warrants further consideration. The concern was never that the oversight body should not support or protect the public's right of access to information or that it was failing to act unbiased or impartial; rather, it relates to the perception created by the term "advocate" within a legislative framework that also requires the oversight body to act as an independent and impartial reviewer of disputes arising under the Act.

Access to information is a fundamental democratic right that should be protected and upheld. However, the primary role of an oversight agency should be to facilitate and safeguard that right through independent oversight, fair interpretation of the legislation, and balanced consideration of the interests of all parties involved. In the City's view, there is an important distinction between advocating for access to information and protecting the right of access to information.

The former may imply a mandate to actively promote or advance greater disclosure wherever possible, whereas the latter reflects a role focused on ensuring that access rights are respected while also recognizing the equally important obligations contained within the Act, including the protection of privacy, the application of legislated exceptions to disclosure, procedural fairness, and the practical realities faced by public bodies in administering the legislation.

The City submits that oversight of the Act is most effective when it is grounded in independence, objectivity, and a balanced assessment of competing interests. The Commissioner plays a critical role in ensuring that public bodies meet their obligations under the legislation and that applicants are afforded meaningful access to information. However, that role should also recognize that public bodies are not adversaries within the process, but participants charged with simultaneously protecting privacy, safeguarding confidential information where required by law, and facilitating access wherever disclosure is appropriate.

For this reason, the City continues to support reconsideration of the terminology used within section 3(2)(f)(i) and suggests that language focused on protecting, promoting, facilitating, or safeguarding the public's right of access to information would be a more accurate reflection of the impartial oversight function outlined within the Act.

Nonetheless the purpose of the provision contained in section 3 of the Act establishes the dual objectives of facilitating access to information and protecting privacy. The City supports both objectives and recognizes their importance. However, from the perspective of municipalities responsible for administering the legislation, the overall structure of the Act does not always provide a balanced framework that gives equal consideration to both applicants and public bodies. While significant procedural protections and accommodations exist for applicants, there are comparatively fewer provisions recognizing the operational realities and obligations imposed upon public bodies.

A notable example exists within the complaints process. Section 42(5) permits the Commissioner to allow a complainant additional time to file a complaint beyond the statutory period. By contrast, there is no equivalent mechanism permitting extensions to the timelines imposed upon public bodies when responding to complaints.

In practice, a public body's response to a complaint frequently requires:

- A detailed justification and explanation of any exceptions relied upon (sometimes requiring legal analysis);
- Preparation of redacted records as disclosed to the applicant;
- Preparation of audited and complete unredacted copies of all responsive records;
- Compilation of correspondence and procedural records;
- Collection of supporting evidence demonstrating compliance with the Act, if applicable; and
- Consultation with staff, departments, third parties, and, where necessary, legal counsel, if applicable.

This work can be substantial and often significantly exceeds the effort required to prepare and submit the initial complaint. The City submits that future amendments should consider mechanisms that allow procedural flexibility for both parties and recognize the significant administrative obligations placed upon public bodies.

Similarly, the City recognizes the value of informal resolution processes. However, the current timelines associated with informal resolution can be restrictive in situations involving large volumes of complex records. Where all parties remain engaged and resolution remains possible, additional flexibility should be available to allow informal resolution efforts to continue before the matter automatically proceeds into a formal investigation stage. The City proposes such changes would better reflect the principles of procedural fairness and administrative efficiency while preserving applicants' rights. The potential of additional time allotted or permitted for informal resolution would subsequently provide the OIPC with additional time to review records provided

by the public body and make informal recommendations to the public body to further facilitate a resolution.

Operational Realities of Municipal Governments

The City respectfully submits that meaningful legislative review must be informed by the experience of those who work directly within the framework established by the Act, including the public bodies responsible for carrying out the daily obligations imposed by the legislation. A comprehensive review would include the consideration of the practical experiences and recommendations of stakeholders who possess first-hand knowledge of the strengths, limitations, and operational implications of the current Act.

This is particularly true for municipal governments, which are the level of government closest to residents. The City recommends that any review of ATIPPA, 2015 recognize that municipalities operate under significantly different administrative and financial circumstances than many provincial public bodies, in addition to fulfilling their obligations under ATIPPA, 2015.

Many municipalities - both small towns and larger urban centres - do not have a dedicated ATIPP Co-ordinator or anyone who has the ability to make privacy assessments or undertake proper information management. This work is sometimes done by the same employee who collects the tax payment from residents, issues a permit for a developer, takes the minutes of a council meeting and then gets called to address a watermain break. Municipal employees do not represent a single department within a governmental structure; they are the entirety of the governmental structure for their municipality and are therefore involved in every level of service delivery – access to information is just one of those services.

Many municipalities in this province operate with only one or two administrators responsible for all municipal operations, rely heavily on part-time staff, have to administer numerous legislative requirements simultaneously and must continue delivering frontline municipal services while responding to access requests. For many smaller municipalities, responding to even a moderately complex access request can consume a substantial portion of already limited administrative capacity. In addition to capacity challenges, many municipalities do not have access to in-house legal counsel and must retain external legal services to assist in responding to complex access requests, complaints and investigations, or other matters arising under the Act. These costs can be significant, particularly for small municipalities operating with limited financial resources. Ultimately, the financial burden associated with obtaining legal advice and ensuring compliance with the legislation is borne by the taxpayers, placing additional pressure on already constrained municipal budgets.

While the City of Corner Brook is considered a larger municipality, it also faces many of the same challenges experienced by smaller municipalities. The City has almost 20,000 residents and it is

responsible for delivering a broad range of services while simultaneously responding to an increasing number of access requests, growing legislative obligations, evolving records management requirements and enhanced expectation regarding transparency and accountability. Despite having approximately 350 employees, the City does not have a dedicated full-time ATIPP Co-ordinator, nor the current capacity to retain one. Responsibility for administering access to information and privacy matters forms only one component of an employee's role and must be balanced alongside numerous other statutory, administrative and operational responsibilities that are essential to the day-to-day functioning of the municipality. In the past 3 years the number of requests received annually has doubled and the complexity of these requests has expanded to require more expansive search, more advanced technologies to assist in the processing of requests and consequently more time required to process these requests.

Fulfilling the obligations imposed by ATIPP, 2015 can have a significant impact on those responsible for administering the legislation, particularly within municipalities. Many municipal administrators simply do not have sufficient capacity within a standard workday to oversee the full range of municipal operations while simultaneously managing the requirements of an access request from beginning to end.

Consequently, compliance with ATIPP extends far beyond the processing of access requests. Municipalities are also responsible for ensuring that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect personal information, responding to privacy matters and breaches, maintaining records managements practices, developing policies and procedures and overseeing training for all municipal employees and elected officials. The responsibilities associated with ATIPPA are therefore ongoing and operational in nature, rather than being limited to individual requests.

As access requests become more frequent and more complex, all the responsibilities of ATIPP place increasing demands on already limited municipal resources. In many cases, there is simply insufficient capacity during regular working hours to complete both operational duties and ATIPP-related obligations. As a result, municipal administrators often find themselves working evenings, weekends, and additional hours beyond their normal schedules in an effort to meet statutory deadlines while continuing to provide essential services to residents and Council. This not only contributes to increases in administrative pressure and workplaces stress but can also have a significant impact on employee well-being and work-life balance.

The City submits that future amendments should acknowledge these operational realities and adopt a municipality-sensitive approach when establishing timelines, compliance requirements, privacy assessment obligations and administrative procedures. An effective legislative framework should protect the public's right of access while also remaining realistic, sustainable and achievable for public bodies tasked with fulfilling their requirements.

Operational Days versus Business Days

In addition to comments regarding the operational realities of municipalities referenced above, the City recommends that ATIPPA, 2015 recognizes the operational realities of municipalities that operate on reduced schedules. Many municipalities throughout the province are only open part-time (one or two days a week, half days, week on week off or other limited operating schedules due to staffing and budget constraints). Therefore a “business day” for a municipality operating one or two days a week is fundamentally different from a business day for a provincial department operating five days per week with full-time administrative staff.

The City therefore recommend consideration of an “operational day” standard for municipalities or another mechanism that adequately reflects the actual availability of municipal staff to process requests. Without these considerations, statutory timelines can impose disproportionately greater obligations upon smaller municipalities.

Elimination of the Advisory Date Requirement

As recommended in the previous 2020 statutory review, the City upholds the recommendation that the requirement to provide advisory dates to applicants early in the request process should be removed from the Act. While it appears, this was put in place with the intention to assist applicants and advise them of the date in which they can expect to receive a response from the public body, the advisory date process frequently becomes redundant when circumstances subsequently require a time extension. Often times in practice, the advisory date is due around the same time that the public body has requested an extension of the timeline. Often times applicants are provided with one date on the tenth day, in accordance with the requirement for an advisory response, only to have provided them with a different date shortly after.

The advisory process adds unnecessary additional administrative burden to the public bodies, as well as additional frustration and confusion to the applicants who are receiving different dates. The City submits that a more streamlined approach focused on statutory response deadlines and approved extensions would better serve both applicants and public bodies

Reform of Response Timelines and Extension Processes

One of the most significant operational challenges faced by municipalities is responding to requests within the prescribed timelines. The Act currently applies the same response framework regardless of the complexity, volume, or scope of a request. As a result, requests involving a handful of records are treated similarly to requests involving thousands of pages and extensive review requirements.

The City recommends that consideration be given to a tiered response framework based upon complexity and estimated record volume. For example:

Estimated Responsive Records	Recommended Response Period
Less than 100 Pages	30 business days
101-500 Pages	40 business days
501-1000 Pages	60 business days
1001 Pages and Above	Timeline established through consultation with the public body and the oversight agency (OIPC)

The example outlined above is intended to outline how a tiered response framework could be established, however it is important to recognize that the overall timeline, as it currently exists in the Act now (20 business days), should be extended for any request.

The City also recommends that initial extensions of a limited duration, such as 10 to 20 business days, be obtainable through a notification process rather than a formal application requiring approval. Only subsequent or lengthy extensions should require a more detailed application and justification process. Such changes would reduce administrative burden while maintaining accountability and transparency.

The extension of timelines should also be extended to that of applications for disregards. Again, the current timeline (5 business days) is not efficient enough time to review the request and make a determination that the request may have the potential to meet the threshold for a disregard. Furthermore, if the public body is upholding its obligation under section 13 of the Act, Duty to Assist, five days is not efficient to assist the applicant to narrow the scope of a requests or clarify a request – if that forms the basis of the disregard application. The timeline should give adequate time for review and potential to consult with the applicant so that in cases where the attempts to assist the applicant prove to be unsuccessful, the public body can still apply for a disregard if it did in fact take longer than the five days.

The City therefore recommends the committee review all statutory timelines in the Act and take into account the public body's obligation to assist applicants, administrative burden of lengthy and multiple time extensions applications, the competing operational requirements of public bodies with the requirements of the Act and the capacity challenges that are facing municipalities and other public bodies.

Thresholds for Access Requests and Vexatious Requests

The City fully recognizes that access to information is a fundamental democratic right and supports maintaining meaningful access to government-held information. However, the City postulates that greater consideration should be given to requests that:

- Seek information already publicly available;
- Duplicate information previously provided;
- Are repetitive in nature;
- Are filed concurrently in excessive numbers; or

- Create an unreasonable administrative burden on public bodies.

The City recommends consideration of a framework requiring applicants to first pursue readily available sources before submitting a formal ATIPPA request for publicly accessible information, such as:

- Public Council minutes;
- Approved municipal policies;
- Enacted bylaws;
- Public reports;
- Public budgets; and
- Other documents routinely available online.

As noted throughout this submission, the City maintains that the public's right of access to information is a fundamental democratic right that must be preserved and protected. However, the City has observed an increasing number of requests that extend beyond the purposes of transparency and accountability and instead place significant administrative and financial pressure on public bodies. In some instances, municipalities are required to respond to multiple concurrent requests, highly repetitive requests, or requests that are exceptionally broad in scope, requiring substantial staff time and resources to process. While the majority of applicants utilize the legislation responsibly, the current framework can make it difficult for municipalities to manage requests that impose a disproportionate operational burden relative to the information being sought. The City maintains that the legislation should provide appropriate mechanisms to address these circumstances while continuing to protect meaningful access to information for legitimate public purposes. The City therefore recommends revisiting disregard provisions to provide public bodies with a more practical ability to address vexatious, frivolous, abusive, repetitive, or excessive requests that consume disproportionate public resources.

Enforcement of Commissioner Recommendations

Consistent with the City's previous submission during the 2020 review process, the City maintains its position that where enforcement of a recommendation arising from a complaint becomes necessary, the responsibility for seeking that enforcement should rest with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner rather than the public body. The current approach places a disproportionate burden on public bodies and can create procedural inefficiencies.

The City recommends examination of alternative enforcement mechanisms that better reflect the oversight role of the Commissioner while maintaining fairness for all parties involved.

Complaints and Accountability Mechanisms Applicable to Commissioner

As previously submitted during the 2020 statutory review process, the City stated there should be a clearly defined process through which concerns regarding the conduct of a Commissioner may

be independently reviewed. Since those recommendations were made, we have seen the Municipal Code of Conduct Act that was specifically designed to address complaints regarding the conduct of Councillors and Municipal Officials. As such, the City recognizes the importance of independent oversight institutions; however, all oversight bodies should be subject to appropriate accountability mechanisms consistent with principles of transparency, procedural fairness, and public confidence.

The City therefore recommends consideration of a formalized complaint, review, or accountability framework applicable to the Commissioner and similar oversight bodies. This recommendation is not intended to suggest that there are any existing conduct issues, deficiencies, or concerns that are presently unaddressed. Rather, it reflects a broader recognition that accountability and transparency are increasingly important principles for all public institutions, particularly those entrusted with independent oversight, decision-making, and regulatory authority. Just as public bodies are subject to review and accountability mechanisms under the Act, consideration should be given to ensuring that appropriate and transparent processes exist for oversight agencies as well. Such a framework would help reinforce public confidence, strengthen accountability, and support the perception of fairness and impartiality that is essential for bodies operating in positions of significant authority and public trust.

Artificial Intelligence, Privacy Impact Assessments and Emerging Technologies

The City supports the Committee's focus on emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, as contemplated by the Terms of Reference. Artificial intelligence presents significant opportunities for improving service delivery and operational efficiency. However, it also creates new privacy considerations involving:

- Collection and use of personal information;
- Automated decision-making;
- Information retention;
- Data sharing and processing; and
- Transparency regarding how personal information is used.

The City supports the development of additional legislative guidance respecting the use of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.

The City also recognizes the value of Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) as a tool for identifying and managing privacy risks. However, any legislative requirements relating to PIAs must acknowledge the practical limitations faced by municipalities, particularly smaller communities. As referenced previously in these submissions, many municipalities do not possess:

- Personnel who can provide necessary privacy assessments;
- In-house legal staff;
- Computer or Information Systems specialist that can advise or implement technical components related to privacy; or

- Sufficient financial resources to complete extensive assessments on all programs, systems, or technologies.

Any future PIA requirements should therefore be flexible, scalable, risk-based, and proportionate to the size and capacity of the public body. Therefore, the City cautions against creating mandatory requirements that may inadvertently impede municipalities from adopting beneficial technologies due to financial or administrative barriers. The City would recommend if there is an intention to pursue PIA requirements, there should be comprehensive training that will provide the municipalities with the tools they need to comply with those requirements.

Cost Recovery and Recognition of Full Request Processing Costs

The City recommends revisiting provisions related to fee estimates and cost recovery. The Act typically focuses primarily on the time required to search for records. However, record retrieval is only one component of the overall work involved in processing an access request. Significant additional time is frequently required to:

- Review records;
- Identify applicable exceptions;
- Conduct line-by-line severing;
- Consult affected parties;
- Conduct legal review where appropriate;
- Prepare disclosure packages; and
- Manage communications throughout the request process.

For many municipalities, particularly small communities with limited staff and financial capacity, these obligations create significant workload and operational pressures. The City therefore recommends that the legislation recognizes the full cost of processing requests, including review and preparation time, rather than focusing solely on search and retrieval efforts. It is the City's position that this recommendation, if included in future legislation framework, would further limit the number of excessively large and unreasonable requests while still maintaining the right to access information.

Consideration should also be given to enhanced cost recovery mechanisms that may include alternative provincial support mechanisms to assist smaller municipalities in fulfilling their statutory obligations.

Suspension of Timelines – Disregard, Third Party Notifications, Clarification of Requests

The City recommends that the Act expressly provides for the suspension of statutory timelines where a public body is:

- Seeking clarification from an applicant or working collaboratively with an applicant to narrow the scope of a request– this dialogue and discussion can sometimes take several days, considering time for both parties to respond back and forth;
- Conducting third party notifications (section 19);
- Preparing and submitting a disregard application (section 21) – it seems futile to continue to pursue processing a request when there is a potential it could be disregarded, however municipalities will often attempt to continue to process the request in order to attempt to meet deadlines if the application is denied.

Municipalities are frequently required to engage applicants to clarify ambiguous requests or narrow overly broad requests, fulfilling the duty to assist in accordance with ATIPPA and ensuring the search process is both practical and efficient. If a request is made to the applicant to narrow the scope or clarify the request it would be difficult for the municipality to begin any search for records without having the appropriate parameters identified and confirmed by the applicant.

The City recommends a legislative provision similar to those found in other jurisdictions – and similar to the provision under section 26(6) for estimate of costs – whereby the response period is suspended. The City’s recommendation is to uphold that same provision, where the public body has engaged in a request that prevents the request from proceeding and re-commences once the applicant confirms the scope of the request, the third-party notification period and requirements have been fulfilled or a disregard application is determined to be unsuccessful by the OIPC. These amendments would promote cooperation between applicants and public bodies while reducing unnecessary extension applications, administrative workload and reduce extensive and time-consuming searches that could have been consolidated.

Third Party Information – Section 19 Notice Requirements and Section 39 Mandatory Exceptions

The City recommends a comprehensive review of the interaction between section 19 and section 39 of the Act. Section 39 creates a mandatory exception to disclosure and provides that the public body shall refuse disclosure where the requirements of the three-part test are satisfied, therefore making the refusal of this information a mandatory exception to disclosure.

At the same time, section 19 contemplates notice being provided to a third party where a public body intends to grant access to information affecting that third party. The interaction between these two provisions creates practical challenges for municipalities.

Where a municipality determines the information satisfies the requirements of section 39:

1. The information must be withheld;

2. No third-party notification is required because the municipality is not proposing to release the information;
3. The third party receives no notice;
4. A complaint may subsequently be filed by the applicant;
5. The municipality bears responsibility for defending the withholding decision;
6. The third party remains unaware of their information is under review

If following a complaint investigation, the Commissioner recommends disclosure of the third-party information, the affected third party may have had no opportunity to participate in the process or assert to its interests in relation to the disclosure of this information.

The City submits that this creates an imbalance whereby municipalities assume legal and administrative responsibility for protecting third-party interests, third parties may lose practical opportunities to defend their confidential information and the public body bears the risk associated with making complex determinations regarding proprietary or commercial information.

The City recommends that third-party notification rights be extended into the complaint and review process. Specifically, where the information was withheld under section 39, a complaint is filed and the Commissioner recommends disclosure of the information. The public body should be authorized and in appropriate circumstances required to provide notice to the affected third party prior to disclosure following a recommendation from the Commissioner.

The third party should then have an opportunity to participate in the review process, make submissions regarding disclosure and exercise any rights of review or challenge available under the legislation. This approach would better balance the interests of applicants, public bodies and third parties while ensuring that municipalities are not solely responsible for defending confidential third-party information under a mandatory exception.

Section 30 – Solicitor Client Privilege

Section 30 protections relating to solicitor-client privilege remain critically important and should be preserved. The City recommends that the legislation, associated guidance materials, or provincial training programs explicitly clarify that solicitor-client privileged information remains protected not only from disclosure to applicants, but also during complaint and review processes where public bodies are required to satisfy their burden of proof.

Municipalities may not always be aware of the legal protections recognized through established case law regarding privileged records. Clear legislative language or formal guidance would provide consistency and certainty across all public bodies. The City strongly supports maintaining these protections to safeguard legal privilege and the ability of public bodies to obtain confidential legal advice. The City further recommends that previous case law be upheld to allow for the

exception of disclosure of solicitor client records from the OIPC or any other agency and continues to allow for use of sworn affidavits from applicable legal counsel in place of that disclosure.

Section 31 – Clarification of Law Enforcement Authorities

The City recommends that section 31 be amended to expressly recognize enforcement activities conducted by municipal government and other public bodies.

The current language should be clarified to confirm that law enforcement exceptions applies to municipal enforcement officers, bylaw enforcement officers, regulatory enforcement personnel, animal control officers and other authorized enforcement representatives of public bodies.

Municipal enforcement activities routinely involve investigations, inspections, evidence gathering, compliance reviews and enforcement proceedings that warrant protection similar to that afforded to traditional law enforcement agencies. Express clarification would improve consistency across public bodies and reduce interpretive uncertainty.

Section 35 – Removal of “Harmful”

The City recommends clarification of section 35 respecting financial and economic interests of public bodies. The section heading currently references “Disclosure harmful to the financial or economic interests of a public body”, however section 35(1) itself authorizes refusal on “disclosure” in and of itself. Based on the section 15 Interpretation Act, 1990 – “headings in the body of an Act ... do not form part of the Act and shall be considered to be inserted for convenience and reference only”. Therefore, the heading may be misleading to a public body who may assume they need to demonstrate harm when that justification is not inherent in that exception to disclosure.

The legislative test contained within section 35 is focused upon the disclosure of specified information rather than a separate requirement to demonstrate tangible financial or economic harm. In practice, public bodies are increasingly required during complaints and investigations to justify the application of the exceptions to disclosure used, such as section 35. However, this section lacks statutory wording that requires a demonstration of harm for the disclosure of this information and has been raised in complaints and investigations where the interpretation of the section is unclear based on the header.

The City submits that the public body should be able to rely on this section as the disclosure of the information listed in this section is addressed in each subsection. Accordingly, consideration should be given to amending the heading to remove the words “harmful to the” and replacing the heading with language more closely aligned with the legislative requirements contained within the section itself. This would better reflect the intent and wording of the provision and reduce

interpretive disputes regarding whether an additional harm analysis must be established beyond demonstrating that disclosure would reveal information described within the section.

Conclusion

The City recommends that the Committee consider the creation of a distinct municipal stream within the legislation or regulations that recognize the unique operational circumstances, staffing levels, and financial capacities of municipalities. A “one-size-fits-all” framework applicable equally to large provincial departments and small local governments does not adequately reflect the realities of municipal administration and may unintentionally create barriers to effective compliance.

While this submission focuses on the municipal perspective, the City recognizes that many of the challenges discussed are shared by public bodies across Newfoundland and Labrador. Public bodies are increasingly operating within complex legislative environments while managing staffing pressures, budget constraints, growing records volumes, evolving privacy obligations, and heightened expectations for transparency and accountability. The recommendations contained in this submission are not intended to diminish the experiences or operational realities of other public bodies, but rather to highlight the unique circumstances municipalities encounter in administering the Act.

While many of the recommendations contained herein are intended to address the unique operational circumstances of municipalities, the broader objective is to support a legislative framework that provides all public bodies with the tools, flexibility, and resources necessary to fulfill their obligations under the Act effectively and efficiently. Any future reform should strive to preserve and strengthen the public's right to access information while ensuring that the legislation remains practical, sustainable, and capable of being administered across all public bodies subject to its requirements.

Overall, the City hopes that the Committee will consider the recommendations outlined in this submission as part of its statutory review of the Act. It is the City's expectation that these recommendations, together with the input received from applicants, public bodies, oversight organizations, and other stakeholders, will contribute to a modernized legislative framework that is responsive to the evolving realities of public administration.

The City further submits that the need for legislative reform is increasingly urgent. Public bodies continue to operate within a framework that, in many areas, no longer reflects current technologies, records management practices, privacy considerations, or the practical realities of administering the Act. The City is hopeful that this statutory review will lead not only to meaningful recommendations, but also to timely legislative action. Stakeholders have invested significant time and effort in sharing their experiences and expertise, and it is important that the review process result in tangible improvements that support both the public's right of access and the ability of public bodies to administer the legislation effectively. While thoughtful consideration is essential,



the City encourages the timely implementation of any resulting reforms so that the benefits of a modernized legislative framework can be realized sooner rather than later.

Sincerely,

Jessica Smith
City Clerk/ATIPP Co-Ordinator
City of Corner Brook

www.cornerbrook.com