

## INFORMATION NOTE

### Advice to Deputy Minister

**DATE:** August 4, 2022

**CLIFF#:** 117841

**ISSUE:** Impact of FOI Application Fee on Request Volumes – Updated

#### BACKGROUND:

- Recent amendments to the *Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA) permit public bodies to charge an application fee. The \$10 application fee came into force, by regulation, on November 26, 2021.
- Information Access Operations (IAO) began collecting application fees for general requests on November 29, 2021, apart from requests submitted by Indigenous Governing Entities who are exempt from the fee.
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- Personal FOI requests, which are not subject to fees, have seen no meaningful change in volume for the past five fiscal years, including after November 26, 2021.
- Figures related to changes in request volumes since the introduction the application fee have been requested and publicly released through the FOI process.
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#### DISCUSSION:

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#### Changes in applicant behavior: Increase in targeted requests

- The data gathered from introduction of the application fee suggest a change in behavior: applicants are directing their requests to specific public bodies, rather than canvassing government more broadly.
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- The number of requests that target four or more ministries ("XGOV") has decreased. Since 2018, XGOV requests have been over-represented by Political Party applicants (approx. 92% of all XGOV requests in FY 2018/2019). XGOV requests have now reduced to 17% of all general requests, as opposed to 62% in Q1 2018/19. See Appendix B.

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- Political party and media requests made up approximately 67% of all total general requests prior to the introduction of the application fee, with political parties being the highest volume applicant of all categories.
- The decline in political party requests has made the highest overall impact on overall request volume - making up 35% of all requests in Q1 FY 22/23, as opposed to 52% in Q3 FY20/21, and down from a high of 72% in FY 19/20.
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#### **NEXT STEPS:**

- CIRMO will continue to track and evaluate the impact of application fees and will continue to communicate trends to ministry executive.
- CIRMO plans to reallocate resources within IAO from general request support to enhance service delivery for all FOI applicants, including, British Columbians who are waiting for access to their personal information.
- CIRMO has prepared a briefing deck for the Minister and is prepared to support in any briefings, as needed (see Appendix D).

Attachments: s.13

Contact: Rhianna Begley, Executive Director, Information Access Operations, s.17

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