

CAYMAN ISLANDS



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW

(2020 Revision)

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Note (not forming part of the Law): This revision replaces the 2018 Revision which should now be discarded.



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CAYMAN ISLANDS



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW

(2020 Revision)

Part I - Preliminary

Short title

1. This Law may be cited as the *Freedom of Information Law (2020 Revision)*.

Definitions

2. In this Law —

“**appointed day**” means 5th January, 2009;

“**exempt matter**” means matter that is exempt from disclosure, whether or not the rest or part of the rest of the record is liable to disclosure;

“**exempt record**” means a record referred to in Part III;

“**foreign government**” includes the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and its Overseas Territories other than the Government of the Cayman Islands;

“**government company**” means a company in which the government has a controlling interest and includes a subsidiary of such company;

“**hold**”, in relation to a record that is liable to production under this Law, means in a public authority’s possession, custody or control;

“**Minister**” means the Minister or the Official Member responsible for a public authority that holds a record;

“**Ombudsman**” means the person appointed by the Governor under section 3 of the *Ombudsman Law, 2017*;

“**public authority**” means —

- (a) a ministry, portfolio or department;
- (b) a statutory body or authority, whether incorporated or not;
- (c) a government company which —
 - (i) is wholly owned by the Government or in which the Government holds more than fifty percent of the shares; or
 - (ii) is specified in an Order under section 3(2); or
- (d) any other body or organisation specified in an Order under section 3(2);

“**record**” means information held in any form including —

- (a) a record in writing;
- (b) a map, plan, graph or drawing;
- (c) a photograph;
- (d) a disc, tape, sound track or other device in which sounds or other data are embodied, whether electronically or otherwise, so as to be capable (with or without the aid of some other equipment) of being reproduced therefrom;
- (e) any film (including microfilm), negative, tape or other device in which one or more visual images are embodied whether electronically or otherwise, so as to be capable (with or without the aid of some other equipment) of being reproduced therefrom,

held by a public authority in connection with its functions as such, whether or not it was created by that authority or before the commencement of this Law; and

“**relevant decision**” means a decision made in relation to the disclosure or otherwise of a record.

Application

3. (1) Subject to subsection (2), this Law applies to —

- (a) public authorities;
- (aa) subject to subsection (5), the Governor’s office; and
- (b) records, regardless of the date when they were created,

but paragraph (a) shall not be read so as to allow access to records containing information —

- (c) that may not be disclosed under section 50 of the *Monetary Authority Law (2020 Revision)*;



- (d) relating to the directors, officers and shareholders of a company registered as an exempted company under Part VII or VIII of the *Companies Law (2020 Revision)*;
 - (e) relating to any other class of information which the Cabinet may, by Order, specify.
- (2) The Cabinet may after consulting the entity concerned where it considers such consultation appropriate, by Order, declare that this Law shall apply to —
- (a) such companies, in addition to those specified in paragraph (c) (i) of the definition of “public authority”, as may be specified in the Order;
 - (b) any other body or organisation which provides services of a public nature which are essential to the welfare of the Caymanian society, or to such aspects of their operations as may be specified in the Order; and
 - (c) any other body or organisation which receives government appropriations on a regular basis.
- (3) An Order under subsection (2) may be made subject to such exceptions, adaptations or modifications, as the Cabinet may consider appropriate.
- (4) The Cabinet may, by Order, declare that the application of this Law in relation to any government company specified in paragraph (c)(i) of the definition of “public authority” shall be subject to such exceptions, adaptations or modifications as the Cabinet may consider appropriate and such Order shall be subject to negative resolution.
- (5) This Law does not apply to —
- (a) the judicial functions of —
 - (i) a court;
 - (ii) the holder of a judicial office or other office connected with a court;
 - (b) the security or intelligence services (as defined in subsection (8)) in relation to their strategic or operational intelligence-gathering activities;
 - (c) such statutory body or authority as the Cabinet may specify by Order;
 - (d) records that belong to the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland whether they are created or held in the Cayman Islands or elsewhere and a certificate to that effect issued under the hand of the Governor or the Secretary of State shall not be subject to any judicial or *quasi*-judicial proceedings;
 - (e) private holdings of the National Archive where the contract or other arrangements under which the holdings are held do not allow disclosure in the circumstances prescribed under this Law;
 - (f) the Cayman Islands Stock Exchange (subject to subsection (6)); or
 - (g) records obtained or created by the Office of the Ombudsman in the course of carrying out its functions (subject to subsection (6)).

- (6) This Law applies to records of an administrative nature held in a registry or other office of a court, the Cayman Islands Stock Exchange, or the Office of the Ombudsman.
- (7) Nothing in this Law shall be read as abrogating the provisions of any other Law that restricts access to records.
- (8) In subsection (5) “**security or intelligence services**” includes —
 - (a) the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service;
 - (b) the Special Constabulary within the Cayman Islands Police Service;
 - (c) the Department of Customs;
 - (d) the entity charged with responsibility for customs and immigration matters;
 - (e) Her Majesty’s Cayman Islands Prison Service;
 - (f) the Financial Reporting Authority; and
 - (g) the Tax Information Authority.

Objects of Law

4. The objects of this Law are to reinforce and give further effect to certain fundamental principles underlying the system of constitutional democracy, namely —
 - (a) governmental accountability;
 - (b) transparency; and
 - (c) public participation in national decision-making,by granting to the public a general right of access to records held by public authorities, subject to exemptions which balance that right against the public interest in exempting from disclosure governmental, commercial or personal information.

Part II - Right of Access

Publication of information by public authorities

5. (1) A public authority shall cause to be published within twelve months of —
 - (a) the appointed day;
 - (b) its establishment; or
 - (c) the coming into operation of an Order under section 3(2) which specified that authority,whichever is last, an initial statement of its organisation and functions, containing the information specified in the Schedule.



- (2) The Schedule applies for the purposes of making available to the public the records described in that Schedule.
- (3) The information required under subsection (1) shall be published in such manner and be updated with such frequency and particulars as may be prescribed.
- (4) The Cabinet may by Order amend the Schedule.

General right of access

6. (1) Subject to the provisions of this Law, every person shall have a right to obtain access to a record other than an exempt record.
- (2) The exemption of a record or part thereof from disclosure shall not apply after the record has been in existence for twenty years unless otherwise stated in this Law or if it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Ombudsman that the exemption reasonably continues to apply.
- (3) An applicant for access to a record shall not be required to give any reason for requesting access to that record.
- (4) Where a record is —
 - (a) open to access by the public pursuant to any other enactment as part of a public register or otherwise; or
 - (b) available to the public, or a particular individual, as the case may be, in accordance with administrative procedures established for that purpose, and irrespective of whether it is available —
 - (i) after payment of a reasonable fee; or
 - (ii) without payment of a fee,access to that record shall be obtained in accordance with the provisions of that enactment or those procedures.
- (5) Where the factors in favour of disclosure and those favouring non-disclosure are equal, the doubt shall be resolved in favour of disclosure but subject to the public interest test prescribed under section 26.

Application for access

7. (1) A person who wishes to obtain access to a record shall make an application to the public authority which holds that record.
- (2) An application under subsection (1) —
 - (a) may be made in writing or transmitted by electronic means other than telephone;
 - (b) shall provide such information concerning the record as is reasonably necessary to enable the public authority to identify it.
- (3) A public authority to which an application is made shall —

- (a) upon request, assist the applicant in identifying the records to which the application relates;
 - (b) acknowledge receipt of every application made in the prescribed manner;
 - (c) grant to the applicant access to the record specified in the application if it is not an exempt record.
- (3A) Where the information provided by the applicant in relation to the record being requested is not reasonably sufficient to enable the public authority to identify it, the authority shall afford the applicant a reasonable opportunity to consult with the authority with a view to reformulating the application so that the record can be identified.
- (3B) Where the information manager consults with the applicant in order to clarify and reformulate the application for access as provided for in subsection (3A), the timeline will be suspended until such time as the applicant submits the reformulated application for access.
- (4) A public authority shall respond to an application as soon as practicable but not later than —
- (a) thirty calendar days after the date of receipt of the application; or
 - (b) in the case of an application transferred to it by another authority pursuant to section 8, thirty calendar days after the date of the receipt by that authority,
- so, however, that an authority may, for good cause, extend the period of thirty calendar days for a further period, not exceeding one period of thirty calendar days, in any case where there is reasonable cause for such extension.
- (5) The response of the public authority shall state its decision on the application, and where the authority or body decides to refuse or defer access or to extend the period of thirty calendar days, it shall state the reasons therefor, and the options available to an applicant.
- (6) Where the decision of the public authority is taken by, or in consultation with, a Minister, chief officer or other officer superior in rank to the information manager, such involvement shall be noted on the written decision on the application.

Transfer of requests

- 8.** (1) Where an application is made to a public authority for a record —
- (a) which is held by another public authority; or
 - (b) the subject-matter of which is more closely connected with the functions of another public authority,
- the first mentioned public authority shall transfer the application or such part of it as may be appropriate to that other public authority, and shall inform the



applicant immediately of the transfer or in such period as may be prescribed in regulations.

- (2) A transfer of an application pursuant to subsection (1) shall be made as soon as practicable but not later than ten calendar days after the date of receipt of the application.

Vexatious, repetitive or unreasonable requests

9. A public authority is not required to comply with a request where —

- (a) the request is vexatious;
- (b) the public authority has recently complied with a substantially similar request from the same person;
- (c) compliance with the request would unreasonably divert its resources; or
- (d) the information requested is already in the public domain.

Forms of access

10. (1) Access to a record may be granted to an applicant in one or more of the following forms —

- (a) the applicant may be afforded a reasonable opportunity to inspect the record;
- (b) the authority concerned may furnish the applicant with a copy of the record;
- (c) in the case of a record from which sounds or visual images are capable of being reproduced, arrangements may be made for the applicant to hear the sounds or view the visual images;
- (d) in the case of a record by which or in which words are —
 - (i) recorded in a manner in which they are capable of being reproduced in the form of sound and images; or
 - (ii) contained in the form of shorthand writing or in codified form,

the applicant may be furnished with a transcript of the data or the words, sounds and images recorded or contained in that record.

- (2) Subject to subsection (3), where an applicant requests that access be given in a particular form, access shall be given in that form.
- (3) A public authority may grant access in a form other than that requested by an applicant where the grant of access in the form requested would —
 - (a) be detrimental to the preservation of the record, or be inappropriate, having regard to its physical state;
 - (b) constitute an infringement of intellectual property rights subsisting in any matter contained in the record.

- (4) Copies of records to which access is granted shall be authenticated by such persons and in such manner as may be determined by the Attorney General, including by whom and how this will be done.

Deferment of access

- 11.** (1) **Repealed** by section 8(b) of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018 [Law 31 of 2018]*.
- (2) A public authority may defer the grant of access to a record —
- (a) if publication of the record within a particular period is required under the provisions of any enactment, until the expiration of that period;
- (b) if the record was prepared for presentation to the Legislative Assembly or for the purpose of being made available to a particular person or body, until the expiration of a reasonable period after its preparation for it to be so presented or made available to that person or body; or
- (c) if the premature release of the record would be contrary to the public interest, until the occurrence of any event after which or the expiration of any period beyond which, the release of the record would not be contrary to the public interest.
- (3) Where a public authority decides to defer access in accordance with subsection (2), it shall inform the applicant of that decision in accordance with the time frame provided for under section 7(4)(a) and shall, where possible, indicate to that person the period during which the deferment will operate.

Partial access

- 12.** (1) Where an application is made to a public authority for access to a record which contains exempt matter, the authority shall grant access to a copy of the record with the exempt matter deleted therefrom.
- (2) A public authority which grants access to a copy of a record in accordance with this section shall inform the applicant —
- (a) that it is such a copy; and
- (b) of the statutory provision by virtue of which such deleted matter is exempt matter.

Cost of access

- 13.** (1) The communication of information may be made conditional upon the payment by the person making the request of a reasonable fee which shall not exceed the actual cost of searching for, reproducing, preparing and communicating the information.
- (2) The Cabinet may make regulations providing —
- (a) for the manner in which fees are to be calculated;



- (b) maximum fees payable, which shall not exceed the cost referred to in subsection (1); and
 - (c) that no fee is to be charged in relation to certain cases.
- (3) For purposes of clarification, no fee shall be charged for a request for information but if the information is to be provided, the fee shall, in accordance with subsection (1), be charged for the provision of that information.

Grant of access

14. (1) Subject to this Law, where —

- (a) an application is made in accordance with section 7 for access to a record; and
- (b) the cost incurred by the public authority in granting access has been paid by the applicant,

access to the record shall be granted in accordance with this Law.

- (2) **Repealed** by section 9 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018* [Law 31 of 2018].

Part III - Exempt Records

Records affecting security, defence or international relations, etc.

15. Records are exempt from disclosure if —

- (a) the disclosure thereof would prejudice the security, defence or international relations of the Islands; or
- (b) those records contain information communicated in confidence to the Government by or on behalf of a foreign government or by an international organisation.

Records relating to law enforcement

16. Records relating to law enforcement are exempt from disclosure if their disclosure would, or could reasonably be expected to —

- (a) endanger any person's life or safety;
- (b) affect —
 - (i) the conduct of an investigation or prosecution of a breach or possible breach of the law; or
 - (ii) the trial of any person or the adjudication of a particular case;
- (c) disclose, or enable a person to ascertain, the existence or identity of a confidential source of information, in relation to law enforcement;

- (d) reveal lawful methods or procedures for preventing, detecting, investigating or dealing with matters arising out of breaches or evasions of the law, where such revelation would, or could be reasonably likely to, prejudice the effectiveness of those methods or procedures;
- (e) facilitate the escape of a person from lawful detention; or
- (f) jeopardise the security of prison.

Records subject to legal privilege, etc.

- 17.** (1) A record is exempt from disclosure if —
- (a) it would be privileged from production in legal proceedings on the ground of legal professional privilege;
 - (b) the disclosure thereof would —
 - (i) constitute an actionable breach of confidence;
 - (ii) be in contempt of court;
 - (iii) infringe the privileges of Parliament; or
 - (c) it is legal advice given by or on behalf of the Attorney General or the Director of Public Prosecutions.
- (2) Records protected from production in legal proceedings on the ground of legal professional privilege shall be exempt without limitation as to time.

Records affecting national economy

- 18.** (1) A record of a type specified in subsection (2) is exempt from disclosure if its disclosure or, as the case may be, its premature disclosure would, or could reasonably be expected to, have a substantial adverse effect on the Caymanian economy, or the Government's ability to manage the economy.
- (2) The types of records referred to in subsection (1) include but are not limited to records relating to —
- (a) duties;
 - (b) monetary policy; or
 - (c) records that are not liable to disclosure under the *Confidential Information Disclosure Law, 2016* [Law 23 of 2016].

Records revealing Government's deliberative processes

- 19.** (1) Subject to subsection (2), a record is exempt from disclosure if it contains opinions, advice or recommendations, or a record of consultations or deliberations —
- (a) prepared for or arising in the course of proceedings of the Cabinet or the National Security Council or a committee of the Cabinet or the National Security Council; or



- (b) prepared for the Governor or a Minister relating to the formulation or development of Government policy
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply to records which contain material of a purely factual nature or reports, studies, tests or surveys of a scientific or technical nature.

Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs

- 20.** (1) A record is exempt from disclosure if —
- (a) its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the maintenance of the convention of collective responsibility of Ministers;
 - (b) its disclosure would, or would be likely to, inhibit the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation;
 - (c) **Repealed** by section 13(a) of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018 [Law 31 of 2018]*.
 - (d) its disclosure would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.
- (2) The initial decision regarding —
- (a) subsection (1)(a) shall be made not by the information manager but by the Minister concerned;
 - (b) subsection (1)(b) and (d) shall be made not by the information manager but by the Minister or chief officer concerned.

Records relating to commercial interests

- 21.** (1) Subject to subsection (2), a record is exempt from disclosure if —
- (a) its disclosure would reveal —
 - (i) trade secrets;
 - (ii) any other information of a commercial value, which value would be, or could reasonably be expected to be, destroyed or diminished if the information were disclosed; or
 - (b) it contains information (other than that referred to in paragraph (a)) concerning the commercial interests of any person or organisation (including a public authority) and the disclosure of that information would prejudice those interests.
- (2) Subsection (1) shall not apply where the applicant for access is the person or organisation referred to in that subsection or a person acting on behalf of that person or organisation.

Records relating to heritage sites, etc.

- 22.** (1) Subject to subsections (2), a record is exempt from disclosure if its disclosure would, or could reasonably be expected to result in the destruction of, damage to, or interference with, the conservation of —
- (a) any historical, archaeological or anthropological resources;
 - (b) anything which is eligible for placement on the Heritage Register under section 21 of the *National Trust Law (2010 Revision)* or any other law relating to the preservation of the heritage of the Islands;
 - (c) any species of plant or animal life so designated or which is endangered, threatened or otherwise vulnerable; or
 - (d) any other rare or endangered living resource.
- (2) Records relating to subsection (1)(a) and (b) shall be exempt for seventy-five years.

Records relating to personal information

- 23.** (1) Subject to the remaining provisions of this section, a record is exempt if its disclosure would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information of any natural person, whether living or dead.
- (2) Subsection (1) shall not apply in any case where the application for access is made by the person to whose affairs the record relates.
- (3) Records relating to personal information shall be exempt without limitation as to time.
- (4) The extent to which third party rights are to be protected shall be set out in regulations made under this Law.
- (5) In determining whether the disclosure of third-party personal information would be reasonable, consideration shall be given as to whether the disclosure would be permitted under the *Data Protection Law, 2017*.

Records likely to endanger health and safety

- 24.** A record is exempt from disclosure if its disclosure would, or would be likely to —
- (a) endanger the physical or mental health of any individual; or
 - (b) endanger the safety of any individual.

Issuance of certificate re exempt record

- 25.** (1) Where —
- (a) the Governor is satisfied that an application for access relates to a record specified in section 20(1)(a); or



(b) a Minister is satisfied that an application for access relates to a record to which sections 15, 16, 17(1)(c), 20(1)(b) and (d), as the case may be, applies,

the Governor or the Minister, as the case may require, may issue a certificate to the effect that the record is an exempt record and shall specify the basis of the exemption.

- (2) Where the Governor or a Minister is satisfied as mentioned in subsection (1) by virtue of anything contained in any particular part or parts of a record, a certificate issued under that subsection in respect of that record shall identify that part or those parts of the record by reason of which the certificate is issued.
- (3) Where a certificate is issued under subsection (1)(a) under the hand of the Governor, it shall be conclusive that the record is exempt and no judicial proceedings or *quasi*-judicial proceedings of any kind shall be entertained in relation thereto.
- (4) Where a certificate is issued by the Governor or a Minister, under subsection (1), the Ombudsman shall be notified of the issuance of the certificate.

Granting access to exempt information

- 26.** (1) Notwithstanding that a matter falls within sections 18, 19(1)(a), 20(1)(b) and (d), 21, 22, 23 and 24, access shall be granted if such access would nevertheless be in the public interest.
- (2) Public interest shall be defined in regulations made under this Law.
 - (3) Notwithstanding that a record or part thereof is exempt from disclosure, access shall be granted to personal information if disclosure would be required under the *Data Protection Law, 2017 [Law 33 of 2017]*.

Making of decisions and reasons public

- 27.** Public authorities shall make their best efforts to ensure that decisions and the reasons for those decisions are made public unless the information that would be disclosed thereby is exempt under this Law.

Part IV - Amendment and Annotation of Records

Repealed

- 28. Repealed** by section 17 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018 [Law 31 of 2018]*.

Repealed

- 29. Repealed** by section 17 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018 [Law 31 of 2018]*.



Repealed

30. Repealed by section 17 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018 [Law 31 of 2018]*.

Repealed

31. Repealed by section 17 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018 [Law 31 of 2018]*.

Repealed

32. Repealed by section 17 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018 [Law 31 of 2018]*.

Part V - Internal Review

Application for internal review

- 33.** (1) An applicant for access to a record may, subject to subsection (3), apply for an internal review of a decision by a public authority to —
- (a) refuse to grant access to the record;
 - (b) grant access only to some of the records specified in an application;
 - (c) defer the grant of access to the record; or
 - (d) charge a fee for action taken or as to the amount of the fee.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), a failure to give a decision on any of the matters referred to in subsection (1)(a) to (c) within the time required by this Law shall be regarded as a refusal to do so.
- (3) An application under subsection (1) may only be made where the decision to which the application relates was taken by a person other than the Minister, a chief officer or the principal officer of the public authority concerned.

Procedure for internal review

- 34.** (1) An internal review shall be conducted —
- (a) by the responsible Minister or the Chief Officer in consultation with the Minister in relation to records referred to in sections 15, 16 and 18; or
 - (b) in any other case, by the chief officer in the relevant ministry or the principal officer of the public authority whose decision is subject to review,
- but no review shall be conducted by the same person who made the decision or a person junior in rank to that person.
- (2) An application for internal review shall be made —



- (a) within thirty calendar days after the date of a notification (in this subsection referred to as “the initial period”) to the applicant of the relevant decision, or within such further period, not exceeding thirty calendar days, as the public authority may permit; or
 - (b) where no such notification has been given, within thirty calendar days after the expiration of the period allowed for the giving of the decision or of any other period permitted by the authority.
- (3) A person who conducts an internal review —
- (a) may take any decision in relation to the application which could have been taken on an original application; or
 - (b) shall take that decision within a period of thirty calendar days after the date of receipt of the application.

Part VI - Ombudsman

Repealed

- 35. Repealed** by section 4 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2017 [Law 27 of 2017]*.

Repealed

- 36. Repealed** by section 4 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2017 [Law 27 of 2017]*.

Repealed

- 37. Repealed** by section 4 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2017 [Law 27 of 2017]*.

Repealed

- 38. Repealed** by section 4 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2017 [Law 27 of 2017]*.

General Activities

- 39.** In addition to any other powers and responsibilities provided for in this Law, the Ombudsman may —
- (a) hear, investigate and rule on appeals filed under this Law;
 - (b) monitor and report on the compliance by public authorities with their obligations under this Law;
 - (c) make recommendations for reform both of a general nature and directed at specific public bodies;

- (d) refer to the appropriate authorities cases where it appears that a criminal offence has been committed; and
- (e) publicise the requirements of this Law and the rights of individuals under it.

Reports

40. (1) The Ombudsman shall, as soon as practicable after the end of each year, lay before the Legislative Assembly —
- (a) a report of the operation of this Law during the year, containing the matters specified in subsection (2) and may from time to time submit such other reports as that person thinks appropriate; and
 - (b) audited accounts.
- (2) The matters referred to in subsection (1) are those relating to compliance by the Ombudsman’s office with this Law and otherwise relating to the activities of that person’s offices including but not limited to —
- (a) the number of applications for access received, granted, deferred, refused or granted subject to deletions;
 - (b) the categories of exemptions claimed and the numbers of each category; or
 - (c) **Repealed** by section 20(b) of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018 [Law 31 of 2018]*.
 - (d) the number of —
 - (i) applications for internal review of relevant decisions; or
 - (ii) appeals against relevant decisions, and the rate of success or failure thereof.
- (3) A public authority shall from time to time and in any case by the end of the year send to the Ombudsman a written report containing the details contained in subsection (2) to the extent that such information is in their custody or control.

Repealed

41. **Repealed** by section 7 of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2017 [Law 27 of 2017]*.

Part VII - Enforcement by Ombudsman

Appeal to Ombudsman

42. (1) A person who has made a request for a record and has exhausted the other means of redress provided for under this Law except this section may in writing apply to the Ombudsman for a decision that a public authority has —



- (a) failed to indicate whether or not it holds a record;
 - (b) failed to communicate the information contained in a record within the time allowed by this Law or at all;
 - (c) failed to respond to a request for a record within the time limits established in this Law;
 - (d) failed to provide a notice in writing of its response to a request for a record;
 - (e) charged a fee that is in contravention of this Law; or
 - (f) otherwise failed to comply with an obligation imposed under this Law.
- (2) An appeal —
- (a) shall be made within thirty calendar days after the date of the notification to the appellant of the relevant decision or of the decision taken on an internal review; or
 - (b) shall, where no notification has been given, be given within the period required by this Law, within thirty calendar days after the expiration of that period.
- (3) Where an appeal is not made within the period specified in subsection (2), the Ombudsman may extend that period if that person is satisfied that the appellant's delay in doing so is not unreasonable.
- (4) The Ombudsman may, at any time after receiving an appeal, decide not to consider the appeal, or to stop considering the appeal, because it is frivolous or vexatious.
- (5) If the Ombudsman decides not to consider the appeal, or to stop considering the appeal, the Ombudsman shall inform the appellant, in writing, of the decision and the reasons for the decision.

Decision on appeal

- 43.** (1) The Ombudsman shall, subject to subsection (2), decide an appeal under the relevant section of this Law as soon as is reasonably practicable, and in any case within thirty calendar days, after giving both the complainant and the relevant public authority an opportunity to provide its views in writing, but the Ombudsman may, for good cause, extend this period for one further period not exceeding thirty calendar days so long as before the expiry of the first period of thirty calendar days that person gives written notice to the parties as to why the period has to be extended.
- (2) In any appeal under section 42, the burden of proof shall be on the public or private body to show that it acted in accordance with its obligations under this Law.
- (3) In that person's decision pursuant to subsection (1), the Ombudsman may —
- (a) dismiss the appeal;

- (b) require the public authority to take such steps as may be necessary to bring it into compliance with its obligations under the law; or
 - (c) in cases of egregious or wilful failures to comply with an obligation under this Law, refer the matter to the appropriate disciplinary authority.
- (4) The Ombudsman shall serve notice of that person's decision, including any rights of appeal, on both the complainant and the public or private body.
- (5) On the consideration of an appeal, the Ombudsman —
- (a) may, subject to paragraph (b), make any decision which could have been made on the original application; and
 - (b) shall not nullify a certificate issued under section 25.

Implementation of decision

44. (1) The Ombudsman may, after giving a public authority an opportunity to provide its views in writing, decide that the public authority has failed to comply with an obligation under this Law.
- (2) In that person's decision pursuant to subsection (1), the Ombudsman may require the public authority to take such steps as may be necessary or expedient to bring it into compliance with its obligations under the Law, and in exercise of this power, may —
- (a) order the publishing of certain information or categories of information;
 - (b) recommend the making of certain changes to the practices of the public authority concerned in relation to the keeping, management and destruction of records, and the transfer of records to the National Archive, but such recommendations shall not be at variance with any law for the time being in force in relation to such matters;
 - (c) recommend the provision of training to the public authority's officials on the right of access to records; or
 - (d) refer a matter to the appropriate disciplinary authority where there has been an egregious or wilful failure to comply with an obligation under this Law.
- (3) The Ombudsman shall serve notice of that person's decision on the public authority concerned and the person who was seeking access to records, which notice shall include a statement of the right of appeal.



Ombudsman's powers generally to investigate

45. (1) In coming to a decision pursuant to section 43 or 44, the Ombudsman shall have the power to conduct a full investigation, including by issuing orders requiring the production of evidence and compelling witnesses to testify; in the exercise of this power that person may call for and inspect an exempt record, so however, that, where that person does so, that person shall take such steps as are necessary or expedient to ensure that the record is inspected only by members of staff of the Ombudsman acting in relation to that matter.
- (2) The Ombudsman may, during an investigation pursuant to sub-section (1), examine any record to which this Law applies, and no such record may be withheld from the Ombudsman on any grounds unless the Governor, under that person's hand, certifies that the examination of such record would not be in the public interest.
- (2A) Notwithstanding subsections (1) and (2), where the Ombudsman requests to examine a record that has been exempted under section 19 of the Law pertaining to Cabinet opinions, advice, recommendations, consultations or deliberations, examination of that record shall take place at the Cabinet's Office.
- (3) A certificate given by the Governor under subsection (2) shall not be subject to challenge in judicial or *quasi*-judicial proceedings of any kind.
- (4) The production to the Ombudsman, pursuant to subsection (1), of a record privileged on the ground of legal professional privilege, shall not constitute a waiver of that privilege.

Investigations on Ombudsman's initiative

46. Notwithstanding the provisions of this Law relating to appeal, the Ombudsman may on that person's own initiative conduct an investigation into any matter and where that person does so, the matter shall be treated as an appeal to the extent practicable.

Appeal from Ombudsman's decisions and orders

47. (1) The complainant, or the relevant public or private body, may, within forty-five calendar days, apply to the Grand Court for leave to seek judicial review of a decision of the Ombudsman pursuant to section 43 or 44, or an order pursuant to section 45(1).
- (2) In any appeal from a decision pursuant to section 43, the burden of proof shall be on the public authority to show that it acted in accordance with its obligations under the law.

Decisions and orders of Ombudsman binding

48. Upon expiry of the forty-five calendar day period for an application for judicial review referred to in section 47, the Ombudsman may certify in writing to the court any failure to comply with a decision made under section 43 or 44, or an order under section 45, and the court may consider such failure under the rules relating to contempt of court.

Part VIII - Measures to Promote Openness

Information managers

49. (1) Every public authority shall appoint an information manager who, in addition to any duties specifically provided for under this Law, shall, under the general and specific supervision of the head of the authority concerned —
- (a) promote in the public authority best practices in relation to record maintenance, archiving and disposal; and
 - (b) receive requests for records, assist individuals seeking access to records, paying special attention to people with relevant disabilities, and receive complaints regarding the performance of the public authority relating to information disclosure.
- (2) The public authority concerned shall ensure that members of the public know the name, function, contact details and such other information relating to the information manager as the authority may consider necessary or expedient to make available to the public.
- (3) The information manager may be full-time or be appointed from among staff performing other functions for the public authority concerned.

Protection of persons in the discharge of functions

50. A person shall not be liable in damages for anything done or omitted in the discharge or purported discharge of the person's functions or duties under this Law unless it is shown that the act or the omission was carried out in bad faith.

Guidance on duty to publish

51. The Deputy Governor shall —
- (a) publish a code on minimum standards and best practices regarding the duty of public bodies to publish information pursuant to section 5; and
 - (b) upon request, provide guidance to the public authority regarding the duty to publish.



Maintenance of records

- 52.** (1) Every public authority shall maintain its records in a manner which facilitates access to information under this Law and in accordance with the code of practice provided for in subsection (3).
- (2) **Repealed** by section 28(a) of *the Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018 [Law 31 of 2018]*.
- (3) The Deputy Governor shall, after consultation with interested parties and upon the recommendation of the Director of National Archive, issue from time to time a code, which shall contain the practices relating to the keeping, management and disposal of records, as well as the transfer of records to the National Archive.

Training of officials

- 53.** Every public authority shall ensure that training is provided for its officials regarding the right to information and the effective implementation of this Law.

Part IX - Miscellaneous

Protection from liability re defamation, breach of confidence and intellectual property rights

- 54.** (1) Nothing in this Law shall be construed as authorising the disclosure of any record —
- (a) containing any defamatory matter; or
 - (b) the disclosure of which would be in breach of confidence or of intellectual property rights.
- (2) Where access to a record referred to in subsection (1) is granted in the *bona fide* belief that the grant of such access is required by this Law, no action for defamation, breach of confidence or breach of intellectual property rights shall lie against —
- (a) the Government, a public authority, Minister or public officer involved in the grant of such access, by reason of the grant of access or of any republication of that record; or
 - (b) the author of the record or any other person who supplied the record to the Government or the public authority, in respect of the publication involved in or resulting from the grant of access, by reason of having so supplied the record.
- (3) The grant of access to a record in accordance with this Law shall not be construed as authorisation or approval —

- (a) for the purpose of the law relating to defamation or breach of confidence, of the publication of the record or its contents by the person to whom access is granted;
- (b) for the purposes of any law relating to intellectual property rights, of the doing by that person of any act comprised within the intellectual property rights in any work contained in the record.

Offences

- 55.** (1) A person commits an offence, if in relation to a record to which a right of access is conferred under this Law, that person —
- (a) alters or defaces;
 - (b) blocks or erases;
 - (c) destroys; or
 - (d) conceals,
- the record with the intention of preventing its disclosure.
- (2) A person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is liable on summary conviction to a fine of one hundred thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term of six months or to both such fine and imprisonment.

Provisions re other laws

- 56.** (1) Where access to a record is granted in accordance with this Law, the person who authorises such access and any other person concerned in the granting thereof shall not, by reason only of so doing, have committed a criminal offence.
- (2) Any person who contravenes this Law shall not be protected against any law relating to official secrets.

Regulations

- 57.** The Cabinet may, subject to an affirmative resolution of the Legislative Assembly, make regulations —
- (a) generally for giving effect to the provisions and purposes of this Law;
 - (b) prescribing the period of time for the doing of any act under this Law; and
 - (c) for anything that is required or permitted to be prescribed under this Law.

Review of Law by Parliamentary committee

- 58.** (1) This Law shall be reviewed from time to time by a committee of the Legislative Assembly appointed for that purpose.
- (2) The first such review shall be conducted not later than eighteen months after the appointed day.



Transitional provisions

- 59.** (1) On the operative date, the post of Information Commissioner is abolished and the assets, liabilities, property and contracts of the office of the Information Commissioner, together with all functions and powers required to ensure the effectiveness and continuity of regulation, are transferred to the Ombudsman.
- (2) Every matter commenced under the *Freedom of Information Law (2015 Revision)* and partly dealt with by the Information Commissioner on the operative date, is to be continued and dealt with in all respects under this Law and the provisions of this Law are to apply accordingly.
- (3) Regulations which relate to the functions or powers of the Information Commissioner and which are in force on the day preceding the operative date, shall continue to apply to the Ombudsman on and after the operative date, with all necessary changes being made, as if made under this Law.
- (4) On and after the operative date, a reference to the Information Commissioner in any other Law or in any document shall be read and construed as a reference to the Ombudsman.
- (5) All things lawfully made or done under the *Freedom of Information Law (2015 Revision)* shall continue in force on and after the operative date and shall be deemed to have been made or done under this Law.
- (6) In this section —
- “**Information Commissioner**” means the person appointed as such under section 35 of the *Freedom of Information Law (2015 Revision)*;
- “**Ombudsman**” means the person appointed by the Governor under section 3 of the *Ombudsman Law, 2017 [Law 23 of 2017]*; and
- “**operative date**” means the date of commencement of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2017 [Law 27 of 2017]*.

SCHEDULE

(section 5)

INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

1. The information referred to in section 5 of this Law is —
 - (a) a description of the functions of the public authority;
 - (b) a list of the departments and agencies of the public authority and —
 - (i) subjects handled by each department and agency;
 - (ii) the locations of departments and agencies; and
 - (iii) opening hours of the offices of the authority and its departments and agencies;
 - (c) the title and business address of the principal officer;
 - (d) a statement of the records specified in subparagraph (e) being records that are provided by the public authority for the use of, or which are used by the authority or its officers in making decisions or recommendations, under or for the purposes of, an enactment or scheme administered by the authority with respect to rights, privileges or benefits, or to obligations, penalties or other detriments, to or for which persons are or may be entitled or subject;
 - (e) the records referred to in subparagraph (d), namely —
 - (i) manuals or other records containing interpretations, rules, guidelines, practices or precedents; and
 - (ii) records containing particulars of a scheme referred to in paragraph (d), not being particulars contained in an enactment or published under this Law.
2. The principal officer of the authority shall —
 - (a) cause copies of such of the records specified in paragraph 1(e) as are in use from time to time to be made available for inspection and for purchase by members of the public; and
 - (b) within 12 months after the publication of the statement under paragraph 1(d) and thereafter at intervals of not more than 12 months, on the Government's or the authority's website or in such manner and with such frequency as may be prescribed, statements bringing up to date information contained in the previous statement or statements.

3. The principal officer is not required to comply fully with paragraph 2(a) before the expiration of 12 months after the appointed day, but shall, before that time, comply with that paragraph so far as is practicable.
4. This Schedule does not require a record of the kind specified in paragraph 1 (e) containing exempt matter to be made available in accordance with paragraph 2, but, if such a record is not so made available, the principal officer shall, unless impracticable or unreasonable to do so, cause to be prepared a corresponding record, altered only to the extent necessary to exclude the exempt matter, and cause the record so prepared to be dealt with in accordance with paragraph 2.
5. Paragraphs 2 and 3 apply in relation to a public authority that either comes into existence after the commencement of this Law, or has been specified by Order under section 3(2) of the Law as if the references in paragraph 3 to the appointed day were references to the day on which the authority comes into existence or has been so specified.

**Publication in consolidated and revised form authorised by the Cabinet this 7th day
of January, 2020.**

Kim Bullings
Clerk of the Cabinet



ENDNOTES

Table of Legislation History:

SL #	Law #	Legislation	Commencement	Gazette
24/2019		Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018 (Commencement) Order, 2019	6-Jun-2019	LG20/2019/s1
	31/2018	Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2018	30-Sep-2019	GE97/2018/s6
		Freedom of Information Law (2018 Revision)	21-Mar-2018	GE23/2018/s1
	27/2017	Freedom of Information (Amendment) Law, 2017	17-Jan-2018	GE35/2017/s7
		Freedom of Information Law (2015 Revision)	17-Jul-2015	GE54/2015/s10
	19/2012	Director of Public Prosecutions (Miscellaneous Amendments) Law, 2012	17-Sep-2012	G90/2012/s17
28/2008		Freedom of Information Law, 2007 (Commencement) Order, 2008	10-Dec-2008	GE45/2008/s1
	10/2007	Freedom of Information Law, 2007	5-Jan-2009	G23/2007s1





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