

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future
c/o Committee Clerk
3rd Floor, 9820-107 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 1E7

To the Members of the Committee:

Re: Review of the *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)*

The Historical Society of Alberta was asked to submit a statement related to the review of PIPA. As a board member of the society, a society that works with historians and researchers from across the province, and as a working public historian, I must admit I have great interest in the long-term effect of this act on historic documents.

Historians rely on documents and other resources to learn about our shared past. While privacy laws are important to protect people today, a draconian approach to documents can have an unintended and long-term effect on the types of documents available to future researchers.

Currently under the act exemptions are made so that records related to persons who have been deceased for at least 20 years as well as records that are at least 100 years of age may be accessed. So there certainly is an attempt and understanding that having access to records is important for historians and genealogical researchers.

But of concern to me are the expectations under managing personal records. The expectation is that when a company no longer requires personal information for legal or business purposes, the records must be destroyed or anonymized. If those are the only two options, there does not appear to be any exemption that promotes a deliberate process to save records so that they can be around for 100 years to become historic records. If the records are destroyed, quite obviously they are not going to later be donated to an archives. Records that have been anonymized may have had the very information relevant to a researcher wiped from the document.

I understand that in other jurisdictions privacy acts have a statement that exemptions may be made for archival purposes when a record has sufficient historical or other value to warrant its continued preservation. Is this true with PIPA? What are the provisions to ensure that appropriate records are maintained to become historic records? While we have a duty to persons today to protect their privacy, do we not also have a duty to leave an important historic legacy to future researchers so our story will be preserved?

Sincerely,

Belinda Crowson
Past-President, Historical Society of Alberta