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## **Media Release**

### **MR. GARY DICKSON, Q.C., APPOINTED ACTING INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER**

Speaker Myron Kowalsky today announced that Mr. Robert Gary Dickson, Q.C., has been appointed by Order in Council on recommendation of the Board of Internal Economy as the Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner. He will take office effective November 1, 2003.

Mr. Dickson received his law degree from the University of Alberta. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1994. He practiced law in Calgary for 23 years. He was elected as the MLA for Calgary Buffalo in 1992 and re-elected in 1993 and 1997. He served for nine years as a member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices that oversees the Information and Privacy Commissioner in Alberta. He served on the Premier's Panel on Access to Information and Protection of Privacy that conducted public hearings in 1993, which led to the development of Alberta's freedom of information and privacy legislation. He was a member of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Select Special Committee in 1998-99 that undertook a review of the FOIP Act. As a member of Alberta Health Minister's Information Task Force, he participated in an eight-month study and consultation on health information issues.

Mr. Dickson did not seek re-election in 2001 and resumed the practice of law, focusing exclusively on access to information and privacy law. He is a member of the Canadian Bar Association National Privacy Law Section executive. Mr. Dickson recently chaired the Legal Education Society workshops in Edmonton and Calgary on Bill 44, Personal Information Protection Act (Alberta). He is the human rights columnist for LawNow and a columnist for the Calgary Herald. He authored the section on health information for the *Privacy Handbook for Canadians: Your Rights and Remedies* [Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, 2003], and is a frequent speaker and commentator on access to information and privacy issues.

In February 2003 the Acting Commissioner, Mr. Dick Rendek, made a recommendation to the Board of Internal Economy that a new full-time Commissioner be appointed and that a stand-alone office be established. The Board approved this recommendation and appointed a selection panel to be chaired by the Acting Commissioner, consisting of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, the Chair of the Public Service Commission, a representative designated by Government, and a representative designated by the Official Opposition. The selection committee held an open, national competition before recommending the successful candidate to the Board.

**For release September 26, 2003**

*The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* came into effect in Saskatchewan in 1992, and was followed by *The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* in 1994. These Acts set out a framework for the receipt and subsequent handling by provincial and certain local government agencies of personal information. The Information and Privacy Commissioner plays a central adjudicative, advisory and educational role under these Acts.

The Commissioner receives representations concerning *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and has the power to review any matter set out in such an application. The legislation commits that the use of personal information provided to government will be restricted to the purpose for which it was initially provided. It also establishes reasonable public access to government information. The recently proclaimed *Health Information Protection Act* is expected to have a substantial impact on the workload of the Commissioner and to shift the focus under the Act to privacy issues and away from access to information issues.