

Robert Marleau named Information Commissioner

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Long-time House of Commons staffer Robert Marleau has been named Canada's new Information Commissioner. Marleau, a well-known and respected parliamentary figure, has served in Commons for 31 years, more than 13 of them as Commons clerk. He also worked as interim privacy commissioner for four months in 2003, beginning an overhaul of the office and its role. In his new job he will oversee implementation of the Access to Information Act -- Canada's freedom of information law.

As an independent ombudsman appointed by Parliament, the information commissioner investigates complaints from people who believe they have been denied rights under Access to Information. The Office of the Information Commissioner was created in 1983 under the Act. The commissioner has strong investigative powers and mediates between dissatisfied applicants and government institutions. As an ombudsman, the commissioner may not order a complaint resolved in a particular way. He or she must rely, therefore, on persuasion to solve disputes, asking for a Federal Court review only if someone has been improperly denied access and a negotiated solution has proven impossible. Prime Minister Stephen Harper described Marleau as "a man of extraordinary professionalism, integrity and demonstrated leadership." "Mr. Marleau has dedicated his career to public service, and I am pleased that he has agreed to be nominated for this position and to, once again, share his knowledge and expertise serving the public," added Harper in a statement.

Marleau received his honorary doctorate from the University of Ottawa. He is a member of the Commonwealth Society of Clerks at the Table, the Association of Canadian Clerks at the Table, and the Canada/USA Association of Clerks and Legislative Secretaries.