



DIY Home security on a budget

By Tom Reimer

When Daniel bought the little house at the edge of town, he quickly discovered that owning a home came with an unexpected responsibility: making it feel safe. He didn't have money for an expensive security system, reinforced steel doors, or a professional installer. What he had was a toolbox, a weekend, and a modest budget.

So he started with the front door.

The door looked strong, but Daniel noticed that the lock hardware was attached to a flimsy section of the frame. He replaced the worn hardware with sturdier hardware and used appropriately sized screws that anchored into the structural framing. He did the same for the door leading into the garage.

Next came the windows.

He checked every latch and discovered that several had become loose over the years. He repaired them and made sure every accessible window could be properly secured. For windows that faced secluded areas, he added inexpensive alarms that would make a loud sound if the window was opened unexpectedly.

On Saturday evening, Daniel walked around the property with a flashlight.

He discovered things he had never noticed before. A tall hedge blocked the view of the side entrance. A stack of garden equipment sat beside the garage. The porch was surprisingly dark.

He trimmed the hedge, moved the equipment into the locked shed, and installed a simple motion-activated light near the entrance.

The changes weren't dramatic, but the house already felt different.

On Sunday, Daniel installed a couple of inexpensive cameras facing the main approaches to the property. He positioned them so that they didn't invade his neighbors' privacy. He also placed a visible alarm notice near the entrance.

Then he created something more important than any gadget: a family plan.

If something suspicious happened at night, nobody would wander downstairs to investigate. Everyone would know where to go and whom to call. A small upstairs room with a solid door became their designated safe room. They kept their phones charged and made sure everyone knew the local emergency number.

Daniel explained to his daughter that the goal wasn't to fight anyone.

"Security isn't about being brave," he told her. "It's about giving ourselves time to get somewhere safe."

That evening, Daniel sat on the porch and looked at the house.

It wasn't a fortress. There were still plenty of things he couldn't afford to change. But the doors were stronger, the windows were secured, the dark corners were illuminated, and the family had a plan.

A week later, a violent storm knocked out the neighborhood's electricity. Daniel's daughter woke frightened by the darkness.

Daniel reached for the flashlight he had placed beside the bed.

The emergency lights came on, powered by batteries. Everyone knew what to do. They stayed together, checked that the doors and windows were secure, and waited for the power to return.

Daniel smiled.

He had originally thought home security was about keeping strangers out.

Now he understood that the most important part was helping the people inside remain calm, prepared, and safe.

His little house didn't need to become a fortress.

It simply needed to become a home that was ready.



THE Mr. X-Files

By John Mutton

CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

Karmageddon

THE PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW

Is Ontario Closing the Door on Government Transparency?

By Mr. 'X' ~ John Mutton, Former Mayor of Clarington

For almost four decades, Ontario's freedom-of-information system has rested on a simple democratic principle: government information belongs, ultimately, to the public.

There have always been legitimate exceptions. Personal information must be protected. Cabinet needs space for confidential deliberations. Commercially sensitive information cannot simply be thrown into the public domain. Police investigations, security information and other protected records require safeguards.

But there is a fundamental difference between protecting legitimately confidential information and removing entire categories of government records from the public's legal right of access.

In 2026, Ontario changed that balance.

Through Bill 97, the Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2026, the province made significant amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act - FIPPA. And Ontarians should understand exactly what changed. From 30 days to 45 business days. Previously, a government institution generally had 30 calendar days to respond to a freedom-ofinformation request. For requests made on or after July 1, 2026, that became 45 business days.

That distinction matters.

Forty-five business days can translate into roughly nine weeks before weekends and statutory holidays are considered. The legislation also permits a second extension in specified circumstances. For journalists working on a developing story, community organizations investigating a public issue, businesses trying to understand a government decision, or ordinary citizens asking how their tax dollars were spent, information delayed can sometimes become information that has lost much of its usefulness. The legislation also introduced "staged access plans."

Where requests are considered sufficiently broad or burdensome - including because of their time period, volume or collective impact on government operations - institutions can establish a process for providing the information in stages.

There are procedures and appeal rights surrounding those plans. But the practical reality remains: obtaining large amounts of public information can now take considerably longer.

The most consequential issue is not simply waiting longer for documents.Mr. X-Files | Ontario Freedom of Information. It is whether certain documents can be obtained through FIPPA at all. The amendments exclude specified records held by the Premier, cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and their offices from the Act. That distinction is enormous.

The independent Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario warned in March that excluding records held at the highest political levels would diminish Ontarians' right to information. The Commissioner also challenged one of the rationales for the change: that sensitive material needs greater protection.

Ontario's existing freedom-of-information legislation already contained protections for cabinet confidences, personal information, confidential commercial information and other legitimately sensitive records.

In other words, freedom of information never meant that everything inside government was automatically public.It meant citizens had a legal right to ask. Government could claim an exemption. And, importantly, an independent Information and Privacy Commissioner could review many of those decisions.

That system of checks and balances is at the heart of access-to-information legislation. And then there is retroactivity. Perhaps the most extraordinary element of the amendments is their treatment of existing records and requests.

Bill 97 expressly provides that the new exclusion applies even to records created before the legislation received Royal Assent. It also provides that a person who previously possessed a right of access to one of those records ceases to have that right - even where an access request had already been submitted. The Information and Privacy Commissioner subsequently stated that the legislation applies retroactively to 1988 and removes the affected records from the scope of FIPPA and from the Commissioner's statutory authority.nThink about what that principle means. A citizen can have a legal right to request a government record.

The citizen can exercise that right. And legislation can subsequently remove the record from the access regime. Whatever one's political affiliation, that deserves serious public discussion.Mr. X-Files | Ontario Freedom of Information. This isn't just about reporters. There is another misconception worth addressing. Freedom of information is sometimes portrayed as something primarily used by journalists trying to embarrass governments. The numbers tell a very different story. According to Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner, the province processed 27,344 provincial freedom-of-information requests in 2024.

Only 1,092 - approximately four per cent - came from the media.

More than 95 per cent came from individuals, businesses, researchers, community organizations and others. Freedom of information is therefore not merely a tool of the press. It is a tool of citizenship. The Ontario government presents the changes very differently. It says Ontario's access and privacy legislation had gone almost four decades without major modernization and needed to reflect modern technology, cybersecurity requirements and contemporary government operations. The province says changes involving cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and their offices bring Ontario more closely into line with approaches elsewhere in Canada and will support more efficient government administration. Those are arguments Ontarians are entitled to consider. But they must also be weighed against the concerns raised by Ontario's independent Information and Privacy Commissioner, who has argued that existing FIPPA exemptions already protected cabinet confidences and other sensitive information and that excluding records altogether reduces transparency and independent oversight.That is the real debate. Democracy isn't simply the ability to vote every four years. It also depends upon citizens having enough information between elections to understand what their government is doing. Who participated in a decision? What advice was provided? How was public money spent? Who communicated with government? What records exist behind a controversial decision? Not every answer must necessarily be disclosed. There are legitimate reasons for confidentiality.Mr. X-Files | Ontario Freedom of Information. But there is an important democratic difference between government saying, "You may ask, but this particular information is legally exempt," and the law saying, in effect, "You no longer have the right to ask for this category of records under FIPPA."

That distinction should concern Ontarians regardless of whether they support or oppose the current government.

Because freedom-of-information legislation isn't supposed to belong to one political party. It belongs to the public. Governments change. The public's right to scrutinize them should endure.



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CITY COUNCILLOR

WARD 5 OSHAWA

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- ✓ **WITH YOUR HELP WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR EVERYONE.**
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Please get involved by volunteering, ordering a sign, or donating to our community through my campaign. Please call me any time.



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