

If you wanted to know...

How to access your personal information held by a municipal organization

... Read on ...

In the course of their operations, many municipal organizations – from a municipality to a police service to a school board – routinely collect personal information from and about individuals. This information may cover a wide range of subjects, and may be held in various formats, including paper, computer tapes, videotapes, microfilm, or sound recordings.

The *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (the *Act*) authorizes municipal organizations to collect personal information in certain circumstances.

The *Act* also gives you the right to request access to any personal information about you that a government organization may hold. You also have a right to request general records held by these organizations. The *Act* applies to municipal organizations, including boards of health, municipalities, school boards, public utilities, police and transit commissions, fire departments, conservation authorities, and other local boards.

Directory of Institutions

The Access and Privacy Office of the Ministry of Government Services maintains a *Directory of Institutions* on its website, www.accessandprivacy.gov.on.ca. The directory lists the government organizations covered under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and provides contact information for each institution.

Requesting Information

When you decide to ask a government organization for the information it has on file about you – or for other government records – start by simply contacting that institution. If it **declines** to provide the information in an informal, over-the-counter process, you may choose to make a written freedom of information request under the *Act*.

You can download a generic *request form* from the Forms section of the IPC's website, www.ipc.on.ca.





Fees

A \$5 application fee must be submitted with your information request. At the municipal level, the cheque is made out to the municipal organization you are filing the request with. (There can be additional fees. No fees are charged for the time required to manually search records containing your personal information, or to prepare such records for disclosure, but you may be charged certain other fees, such as photocopying fees. For general records, you may be charged fees for photocopying, the costs of manually searching the records you have requested or preparing them for disclosure, or other costs incurred in responding to your request.)

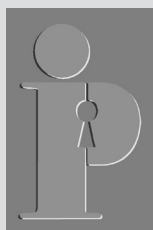
At the *municipal level*, the **average cost** of a freedom of information request for **personal information** was \$7.88 in 2005. The comparable average cost for general records was \$18.95 under this *Act*.

With limited exceptions, government organizations have 30 days from the date they receive your request to respond.

Appeals

Most information held by municipal organizations is available to the public through the *Act*, but there are several specific exemptions. (For example, you generally cannot obtain the personal information of someone else.)

If your request is denied, the government organization must inform you of the reason for the refusal and of your right to appeal to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. (In addition to the denial of access, there are several other grounds for appeal. See the IPC brochure, *The Appeal Process and Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner*, which is available on the IPC's website -- as is an appeal form -- and from the IPC's Communications Department. There is a \$10 fee for appeals related to personal information, with a cheque made out to the Minister of Finance.)



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If you have any comments regarding this publication, wish to advise of a change of address, or be added to the mailing list, please contact:

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