



## Your Rights under Ontario's Freedom of Information Laws

Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)*, which came into effect on January 1, 1988, established an Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) as an officer of the Legislature. The Commissioner is appointed by and reports to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and is independent of the government of the day.

*FIPPA* applies to all provincial ministries and most provincial agencies, boards and commissions, as well as to universities and colleges of applied arts and technology.

The *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*, which came into effect January 1, 1991, broadened the number of public institutions covered by Ontario's freedom of information and privacy legislation. It covers local government organizations, such as municipalities, police, library, health and school boards, and transit commissions.

The term *freedom of information (FOI)* refers to public access to general records relating to the activities of government – ranging from administration and operations to legislation and policy – and access to records of your own personal information that government offices may hold. Being able to access this information is an important aspect of open and accountable government. (Privacy protection is the other side of that equation, and refers to the safeguarding of personal information held by government.)

The *Acts* provide that, subject to limited and specific exemptions, information under the control of provincial and municipal government organizations should be available to the public.

There were 37,090 FOI requests filed across Ontario in 2009 – the third highest total ever.

If you make a written freedom of information request under one of the *Acts* to a provincial or municipal government organization and are not satisfied with the response, you have a right to *appeal* that decision to the IPC. There were an even 1,000 appeals filed with the IPC in 2009.

Appeals concerning either *general* or *personal information* records may relate to a refusal by a government organization to provide access, the fees the organization wants to charge, the fact that the organization did not respond within the prescribed 30-day period, or other procedural aspects relating to an FOI request.

When an appeal is received, the IPC first attempts to settle it informally. If all issues cannot be resolved, the IPC may conduct an inquiry and issue a binding order, which may require the government organization to release all or part of the requested information.



Information and Privacy  
Commissioner of Ontario



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