EMPLOYEE'S GUIDE TO THE MUNICIPAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY ACT (MFIPPA)



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This reference guide highlights the main features of the legislation, including procedures for recognizing and processing formal access to information requests and the requirements for the collection, use and disclosure of personal information relating to City clients, employees and the public. Information in this guide is accurate at the time of printing.

City Clerk's Department
CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF KINGSTON
216 Ontario Street
Kingston, Ontario K7L 2Z3

Telephone: (613) 546-4291 Fax: (613) 546-5232

Revised – November, 2014

INTRODUCTION

In the 1980's, the Province of Ontario recognized that the public had two interests in government-held information. First, the public had an increasing desire to obtain information that was being used to administer and make decisions on government programs. Second, the public expressed growing concern about privacy protection in light of the increasing number of electronic data systems and the increased ability of users to compile, examine and transmit personal information without the knowledge of the affected individuals. The Province enacted two similar laws to address these concerns. The first law regulated provincial ministries and agencies; the second, titled the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ("MFIPPA", or "the Act"), applied to local government bodies such as the Corporation of the City of Kingston.

Local government institutions have been subject to MFIPPA since January 1, 1991. The Act imposed a number of duties. All employees who communicate with the public or who have control or custody of information must be aware of the provisions of the Act and the implications it has on day-to-day operations.

The City Clerk's Department has the responsibility for establishing and implementing access and privacy policies and procedures. As a City employee, you may be affected by some or all of these procedures, including:

- responding to informal information requests;
- managing records and personal information;
- identifying a MFIPPA request;
- > assisting with records searches;
- > insuring the protection of personal privacy; and/or
- participating in awareness training.

I. OVERVIEW

PURPOSES OF THE ACT

The purposes of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* are:

- 1) to provide everyone with a right of access to information held by the City according to the principles that:
 - the Act should be used to supplement routine (non-MFIPPA) methods of obtaining information;
 - the right of access is subject to limited and specific exemptions and exclusions;
 - all persons have a general right of access to their own information, and to request its correction; and
 - the City's actions on information access may be subject to review and possible change by an independent body, the Information and Privacy Commission of Ontario.
- 2) to protect individual privacy by:
 - requiring the City to comply with MFIPPA with respect to the collection, use, disclosure, retention and disposal of personal information; and
 - providing everyone with a right to complain to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario if they feel the City has mishandled their information.

With minor exceptions, the Act applies to all records in the control or custody of the City, even if they were created before 1991. MFIPPA also applies to information supplied to the City by other sources, such as businesses, municipalities, government offices or individuals.

KEY DEFINITIONS

The definitions of two key terms guide the interpretation of the Act's access to information and privacy protection requirements:

Records

The Act provides everyone with a right to information in City records. A "record" is all recorded information held by the City, regardless of physical form — paper files, microfilm, audio-visual materials, maps, electronically stored data, emails, etc. The City is not required to provide information that has not been recorded (e.g. information discussed, but not recorded). The City is not required to restore records that have been properly destroyed under the authority of its retention by-law. Draft copies of reports, handwritten notes or annotations made by employees are City records. These records are not the personal property of individual employees and may be requested under the Act (an exemption may apply).

Personal Information

"Personal information" is any recorded information that can be linked directly or indirectly to an identifiable individual, including City employees, the public, or clients of City programs. The term includes, but is not restricted to, a person's address or telephone number, criminal, medical, financial, education or employment information; and opinions about or from the person. Notes by City employees about a client are the client's personal information. A record may also be personal information if the information contained in it may be used to deduce the identity of a person. Records related to a business, proprietorship or trade union are not personal information. Certain employee information (e.g. job description, salary range) does not qualify for protection as personal information.

CITY STRUCTURE AND MFIPPA RESPONSIBILITIES

The City's actions respecting access and privacy are under the scrutiny of City Council, the Province of Ontario, clients of City programs, and the public at large, including the media. To ensure proper adherence to MFIPPA's obligations the following administrative structure is in place:

- ➤ The Mayor is designated by by-law as head of the Municipal Corporation for the purposes of this Act.
- ➤ The Mayor has delegated all powers and duties under the Act to the City Clerk.

All departments and employees within the City are responsible for ensuring that they are protecting the records in their custody and under their control. But specifically:

- the Corporate Management Team shall:
 - provide corporate leadership and support for ensuring that corporate records are being effectively managed and maintained, and that requests for records are being responded to in a timely manner.

Directors shall:

- be the first point of contact for the City Clerk when a request for records made pursuant to MFIPPA is received;
- ensure the cooperation of employees when a request for records made pursuant to MFIPPA is received;
- be accountable for the implementation of the Information Access and Protection Policy within their department; and
- ensure the consistent application of the Information Access and Protection Policy by the Managers and Supervisors within their department.
- Managers and Supervisors shall:
 - assist their Director in the gathering of records responsive to requests made pursuant to MFIPPA;

- ensure employees are trained in the management of corporate records; and
- monitor serious breaches of recorded information (e.g. damage, theft, misuse, privacy complaints, or unauthorized disposition of records) and report such occurrences to their Director and to the City Clerk.

Employees shall:

read, understand, and comply with the provisions of the Information Access and Protection Policy.

> the City Clerk shall:

- respond to requests for information made pursuant to MFIPPA and act as the Head of the City with respect to MFIPPA;
- provide leadership for records management with respect to vision, mission, policy, standards, strategic planning, training, and quality assurance, and facilitate the development, maintenance and improvement of records keeping solutions, tools and systems; and
- gather records directly in response to a request.

Legal Services shall:

provide Legal Advice to the City Clerk and also direct the preparation of formal responses to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

> the Corporate Records and Information Officer shall:

- assist the City Clerk in the collection of records responsive to requests made pursuant to MFIPPA;
- assist the City Clerk in responding to requests for records made pursuant to MFIPPA;
- coordinate the corporate wide program for recorded information management;
- recommend procedures, standards, and guidelines with respect to the management of records;
- recommend and implement policies with respect to records management, MFIPPA, and privacy;
- identify the tools, facilities, and staff necessary for service delivery; and
- ensure the existence and currency of supporting by-laws.

II. INFORMATION REQUESTS

EXEMPTIONS AND EXCLUSIONS FROM ACCESS

The right of access to information is subject to some limitations. There are two types of exemptions (the City may withhold information that meets the exemption) and some exclusions from the right of access:

Mandatory Exemptions – the City **must not** normally release records containing:

- personal information one person requests records that contain information about another person;
- business information a person requests certain information supplied in confidence by a business or similar organization; and
- relations with governments a person requests information supplied in confidence to the City by any provincial or national government.

Discretionary Exemptions – the Head may choose to withhold the following information:

- draft by-laws, minutes of closed meetings
- advice and recommendations of employees
- law enforcement (includes programs where the City may apply a penalty)
- economic interest of the City
- solicitor-client privilege
- danger to a person's health or safety
- information about to be published

There are many conditions that must be met before a record can be withheld under either type of exemption. Do not pre-judge any MFIPPA request or indicate to the requester that the records sought are or are not available. Only the City Clerk is legally permitted to make a decision to withhold or release a record when formally requested under the Act. Employees in the program affected by the request will be able to comment before a decision on access is made.

Exclusions – amendments to the Labour Relations Act in late 1995 exclude most labour relations and certain employment-related records from the Act. The City is not obliged to provide access or justify the use of the exclusion. In some cases the requested information may be supplied. This exclusion may affect City employees who seek information about labour relations issues like grievances, disciplinary measures, job competition decisions, bumping and Workers' Compensation.

Amendments to MFIPPA resulting from the Savings and Restructuring Act, 1996 allow the City to refuse requests that are deemed to be frivolous or vexatious. The City Clerk, not departmental employees, makes this judgment.

A few other minor exclusions also apply. The requester may appeal the City's decision to exclude records responsive to a MFIPPA request to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

RESPONDING TO INFORMATION REQUESTS

Informal Requests (not made under MFIPPA)

Most information requests received by the City are not submitted under MFIPPA. Employees are encouraged to respond to these informal requests, but some precautions should be observed because of MFIPPA's requirements:

- requests for records that contain another person's information should be referred to the City Clerk for advice. In most cases this information will only be released on consent from the affected person;
- employees who receive requests for records that contain confidential business information or confidential information supplied by another government agency should consult the City Clerk for assistance;
- it may be appropriate to summarize, prepare a synopsis of, or simply discuss information that is complex or voluminous;
- employees may ask that requests for sensitive information or information not normally provided be made under MFIPPA.

Requests from City Clients or Employees for their Personal Information

The above points also apply to personal information requests from clients and employees. In addition, you should observe the following procedures:

- > set an appointment to provide access, then review the records to identify exempt or sensitive information before the appointment:
- guarantee the identity of the requester;
- inform the requester if information has been withheld. Tell the requester that he/she may use make a request for the withheld records through MFIPPA (note that records may still not be released through this process);
- at any point in this process if there is any doubt about the accessibility of the information, contact the City Clerk for advice.

Requests from City Clients or Employees to Correct their Information

Employees who receive requests to correct personal information should consult the City Clerk for assistance. Persons who request correction of their information may ask that a Statement of Disagreement be attached to the record and may ask that everyone who used the information in the previous 12 months be notified of the request.

Formal Requests under MFIPPA

The City Clerk, not departmental employees, is responsible for processing all formal MFIPPA requests, including formal requests by persons seeking their own information. However, often the requester will place the request with the City office holding the information. City employees have the following roles:

- employees who communicate with the public in each work site and department must be able to recognize a formal request. All MFIPPA requests must be written and signed and accompanied by an application fee. Figures 1 to 3 show examples of informal and formal requests;
- ➤ the current application fee is \$5.00. If the request is not accompanied by the fee, forward the request to the City Clerk who will contact the requester. The request is not active until the requester pays the fee;
- date stamp the request because time limits apply to the City's response. Contact the City Clerk by telephone or by email immediately. The City Clerk will make arrangements to collect the request and applicable records;
- assist the City Clerk in locating records and providing background information. The City Clerk will discuss the recommended response with affected employees and possibly with the City Solicitor before a reply is sent to the requester;
- before the reply is sent, contact with the requester is the responsibility of the City Clerk. Individuals, businesses or other parties who may be affected by a request will be contacted by the City Clerk following the requirements in MFIPPA.

TIME LIMITS, FEES AND APPEALS

Except in certain situations, the City must respond to formal requests within 30 calendar days. This short period underscores the need to notify the City Clerk immediately on receipt of a MFIPPA request.

The Savings and Restructuring Act, 1996 expanded the fees payable to receive information. In addition to the application fee which applies to every request, the requester pays for search time for records not immediately at hand, copying, severing of exempt information, computer costs, and invoiced expenses. Personal information requests are exempt from some of the fees. Departmental employees must track time expended in assisting with requests because the City Clerk must provide an estimate to the requester if the fees will exceed \$25.00. If the fee is \$100.00 or more the requester must pay a deposit.

Requesters may appeal most actions involved in responding to a request, including refusals to give access, fees and time limits. An appeal fee must normally be paid to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. The appeal may result in a binding order directing the City to take certain actions. The City Clerk will involve affected departmental employees in responding to appeals.

Figure 1 Example of a letter requesting access to records under the Act. Notify the City Clerk about this request.

January 05, 2014

Jane Kingston, Caseworker Social Services Division 362 Montreal Street Kingston, ON K7K 3H5

Dear Ms. Kingston:

I disagree with your department's decision to reduce my assistance benefits effective February 1.

I am requesting, under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, a copy of my entire assistance file, including calculations of benefits and memos between your department's employees about me.

Yours truly,

John P. Doe

Figure 2 Example of an informal request that you can answer through existing information release practices.

October 24, 2014

Manager of Planning City of Kingston 1425 Midland Avenue Kingston, ON K7P 2Y2

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a student in the School of Planning at the University of Western Ontario. I am conducting research on the process by which municipalities in Ontario approve proposals for subdivisions.

I would like to obtain copies of the policies and procedures used by your department in approving subdivision applications.

For your convenience, I have enclosed a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Thanks in advance for your assistance.

Yours truly,

Janet Doe

Figure 3 Example of an information request making an indirect reference to the Act. Notify the City Clerk about this request.

November 12, 2013

Purchasing Department City Hall 216 Ontario Street Kingston, ON K7L 2Z3

Dear Sir or Madam:

On August 4, 2013, City Council awarded a contract to produce promotional material for the City's economic development program.

My company, XYZ Communications Limited, was an unsuccessful bidder for the contract. I understand that Ontario law gives me the right to obtain information from Municipalities. I would like copies of the bids of all the competitors as well as the City's evaluations of the proposals.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Pat X. Smith President

III. PRIVACY PROTECTION STANDARDS

To protect individual privacy, the Act places restrictions on the collection, use, disclosure, retention, and disposal of the personal information related to clients of City programs, members of the public and City employees. Sharing of personal information both within and outside the City organization is limited by the Act. The privacy protection standards are in effect constantly. City employees are individually responsible for meeting the privacy requirements. The City Clerk and the Corporate Records and Information Officer will provide assistance to City employees to insure compliance. Employees who handle personal information should also participate in training.

COLLECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Employees may collect personal information only with legal authority. Legal authority is present under the following three situations:

- legislation or regulations require the collection of personal information.
 Examples include: applications for social assistance, planning permissions, or residency at Rideaucrest Home, and documentation of workplace injuries;
- 2. the personal information is necessary for law enforcement. Examples include: by-law enforcement, social assistance fraud investigations, landfill by-law infractions, and noise complaint investigations; or
- employees must have the personal information to operate legally mandated City functions, or City by-laws allow the collections. There are many situations where this occurs, including: payroll administration and performance appraisal of employees, client intervention by social workers, and workplace harassment investigations.

NOTICE OF COLLECTION

On the initial collection of personal information from a City client, or when information is collected for a new, unrelated purpose, the individual to whom it relates must be notified of:

- the legal authority for collecting the information (statute, regulation, or by-law);
- the principal purpose(s) of the collection; and
- the title, business address and telephone number of an employee who can answer questions about the collection.

This information is referred to as the Notice of Collection. City forms that collect information from a client should include the Notice. Staff who generate new forms or reprint old forms that collect personal information should add the Notice of Collection, if appropriate, or update it for accuracy. Figure 4 shows a sample Notice of Collection used at a public meeting.

You can provide the Notice of Collection in other ways, including: in a letter of acknowledgement, in an advertisement, verbally, or on a sign posted at the point of collection. The requirement to give notice applies to both verbal and written

collection. Telling your clients the reason for collecting personal information is good business practice. The information assists them to understand their involvement in the City's program.

In some cases (e.g. job references, collecting medical information from a physician, performing a criminal records check, or conducting an assets check on a social assistance recipient), the City collects personal information indirectly. In most of these situations, the City must first obtain authorization from the individual to whom the information pertains.

Figure 4 Example of a form which collects personal information and which includes a Notice of Collection. The wording of the Notice will vary depending on the type of form and the program.

COMMENT SHEET

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF KINGSTON PROPOSED NEW CITY HALL CONSTRUCTION PUBLIC MEETING - FRIDAY, July 13, 2015 Please complete this sheet and leave with staff before leaving the public meeting COMMENTS NAME: _____ ADDRESS: NOTICE OF COLLECTION

Personal information, as defined by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), on this form is collected under the authority of MFIPPA, the Municipal Act, and all other relevant legislation. Personal information will be used to assist City staff in making a decision on this project. Names, addresses and comments may be included in material available to the public. Questions regarding this collection should be forwarded to Real Estate and Land Development, 216 Ontario Street, Kingston, ON, 613-546-4291.

USE AND DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

The Act limits the City's use and disclosure of personal information to certain situations, including:

- the purpose for which it was obtained (normally identified in the Notice of Collection), as well as related purposes if the affected individual would reasonably expect the subsequent use or disclosure to occur;
- if the person to whom the information relates gives consent for the new use or disclosure; or
- disclosure is to another City employee if he/she needs the information for a proper administrative function.

The Act also allows disclosure of personal information in several other limited situations. If you are unsure, contact the City Clerk for guidance.

Personal information is sometimes used or disclosed for a non-routine purpose (e.g. client information disclosed to a police officer for an investigation). In these cases, the irregular use or disclosure must be documented.

Employees do not have an automatic right to use or to access personal information by virtue of their employment in a particular department or program. Use and disclosure of personal information must be directly related to their job duties.

RETENTION AND DISPOSAL OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

The Act requires personal information to be retained for the period prescribed in the City's retention by-law, or if not covered by the by-law, for a minimum of one year. If you are responsible for employee or client information, familiarize yourself with the retention periods for the records.

Employees should ensure that physical security is in place to prevent unauthorized access to personal information by staff or the public. The use of computer passwords and careful location and locking of file cabinets are practices which should be routine. Personal information disposal practices should be secure, and may vary between departments and programs, and with the sensitivity of the data. Contact the City Clerk for further direction.

IV. PROTECTION OF CITY RECORDS

- Computer passwords shall not be shared with anyone. These passwords must be protected at all times (e.g. passwords are not to be left out or written on calendars or notepads around staff workstations).
- Computers must be locked before employees leave their desk for any length of time.
- All documents containing personal or confidential information shall be secured in a locked cabinet or drawer when employees are away from their desk area for any length of time (e.g. the end of the work day, at the end of the work week, or in the event they are called away from their desk).
- When photocopying documents containing personal or confidential information employees shall:
 - not leave copies and originals unattended;
 - ensure all copies and originals are removed from the photocopier when finished; and
 - ensure all spoiled or unwanted copies are placed in one of the secure shred bins located in the City office areas.
- ➤ Discussions concerning records containing personal or confidential information shall not be made with City employees that should not be privy to the information in order to properly do their job.
- The discussion of records containing personal or confidential information shall not occur in person or over the telephone in public areas where conversations could be heard by others.
- Records containing personal or confidential information shall not be viewed in public areas where they can be viewed by others.
- City records shall not be discarded in private or public trash/recycling containers. Locked shredding consoles located within the City buildings shall be utilized for this purpose. Records containing personal and confidential information shall be disposed of in one of the secure shred bins located in the City office areas.
- ➤ If there has been an inappropriate disclosure of personal or confidential information, the City Clerk shall be informed immediately.

BREACH OF THE INFORMATION ACCESS AND PROTECTION POLICY

Non-compliance or violations of the Information Access and Protection Policy will result in the application of appropriate corrective/progressive discipline up to and including dismissal.

Any employee who suspects that a compromise or breach of this Policy has occurred shall immediately report the incident to his or her Supervisor, Manager, or Director.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT MFIPPA

Must all information inquiries be treated as Freedom of Information Requests?

No. Most information held by City staff may be released without a formal request. Exceptions include records that contain personal information, confidential business information, and information excluded from access under another law. Generally, you should use the formal request process if the records sought are subject to a mandatory exemption under MFIPPA, or if departmental or program policies don't allow routine access.

What should I do if I'm uncertain whether to release information informally?

When in doubt, do not release the records. Ask the City Clerk's Department for assistance. It is better to err on the side of caution, than to release a record or personal information that may be subject to an exemption.

Can a person submit a Freedom of Information request over the telephone or by e-mail?

No. Instruct the person to send a written, signed request for the information or to fill out a request form (available from the City Clerk's Department, 216 Ontario Street, Kingston, ON, K7L 2Z3). Ask the person to send the request with the \$5.00 application fee to the City Clerk's Department. The City Clerk will send a receipt for the application fee to the requester.

A Police Officer is asking for a client file I'm responsible for. What should I do?

MFIPPA allows the City to disclose personal information to law enforcement officers like the Police, and Employment Insurance and Revenue Canada Employees when they are conducting an investigation. Before the City can release the records, written documentation of the request is necessary. Ask for the request in writing and when received, contact the City Clerk.

I use a number of forms to document client information in my program. Which ones should include the Notice of Collection for personal information?

Typically, the following forms require the addition of a Notice of Collection: application forms that are filled out or signed by the client (e.g. dog license application, Ontario Works assistance, child care placement), as well as forms that collect additional information from existing clients (e.g. Family & Children's Services records checks for child care providers, Parental Support and employment program referrals). Survey and comment forms used to obtain public input at public meetings (e.g. Engineering projects, community open house events), as well as sign-in sheets used at similar events should include a Notice of Collection which indicates the expected use of the information. Comment sheets that do not include a name or address normally do not require a Notice. See Figure 4 on page 14 for the proper form and content of a Notice.

Does MFIPPA apply to City employees' information?

Employees generally have the same access and privacy rights as the public. Normally, your employment information is available informally by asking Human Resources or supervisory staff. Amendments to the *Labour Relations Act* passed in 1995 place some limitations on the information that employees may access in various labour relations situations. Contact Human Resources or the City Clerk for further direction.

Can anyone request information about my employment with the City?

Certain employee information is available to the public on request. Your salary range and benefits as well as your duties, job description and classification are public information. Disclosure of certain other information (e.g. expense claims) may be permitted or required by other laws. Your status as a City employee is normally a matter of public record.

What protection does the City have from people who ask for a large volume of records, then refuse to collect or pay for them?

The Act allows the City to charge application and processing fees and requires us to provide the requester with a fee estimate. The City can also ask for a 50% down payment if the fee estimate is greater than \$100.00. No action will be taken on the request until the requester pays the down payment. Amendments to the Act in early 1996 allow the City to refuse frivolous and vexatious requests in certain circumstances.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The City Clerk is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Access and Privacy Program. For questions, you may contact the Corporate Records and Information Officer at 613-546-4291 ext. 1316 or the City Clerk at 613-546-4291 ext. 1247.

On the internet more information is available from Ontario's Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner at: www.ipc.on.ca.

APPENDIX A

The City of Kingston's MFIPPA request form prescribed under the Act. Notify the City Clerk if you receive a request made on this form (or one like it).



Appendix A

Access/Correction Request Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Requ	est for:			Submit to:						
[]	Access to General Records			City Clerk						
[]	Access to Own Personal Information			Kingston City Hall 216 Ontario Street Kingston, ON K7L 2Z3						
[]	Correction of Ov Information	INCLUDE \$5.00 APPLICATION FEE								
Last	Name			First Na	me		Initial			□Mrs. □Miss
Stree	t Number and Nam	ne	Apt. No.	/P.O. Box No./F	R.R.	No.	City	·	Prov	ince
Posta	l Code	Telepho Day:	one Number((s)		Eve	ning:			
If request is for access to, or correction of, own personal information records, please fill out the information below as well as identify the personal information bank or record containing the personal information of known:										
Date	of Birth (yyyy/mm/c	dd): L	_ast Name a	ppearing on red	ords	if <u>not</u>	same as abo	ove:		
Detailed description of requested records, personal information records, or personal information to be corrected. Note: If you are requesting a correction of personal information, please indicate the desired correction and, if appropriate, attach any supporting documentation. You will be notified if the correction is not made and you may require that a statement of disagreement be attached to your personal information.										
Preferred method of access to records:										
	[] Examine (Original	1 -		[]	Receive Cop	py of C)rigina	<u></u>
	e (Please Print)			(yyyy/mm/dd)			nature			
EACH	I SEPARATE RE	EQUEST	MUST BE	ACCOMPANI	ED	BY T	HE \$5.00 A	APPLIC	CATIO	N FEE.

EACH SEPARATE REQUEST MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE \$5.00 APPLICATION FEE CHEQUE OR MONEY ORDERS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO:

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF KINGSTON.

Personal information contained on this form is collected pursuant to Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation and will be used for the purpose of responding to your request. Questions about this collection should be directed to the Freedom of Information and Privacy Coordinator at the institution where the request is made.