



Your guide to Information Access and Privacy



Produced by:

The Records and Information Management Section
Township Clerk's Department
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Working with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

- What is F.O.I.?
- How do I get the Information I want?
- How can I be sure that my privacy is protected?



Is the Information available somewhere?

Sometimes the requested information is available through other sources. For example, many property surveys are on file at the Land Registry Office and are available to the public immediately, at a minimal cost.

Building drawings can be obtained from the architect or original engineer who designed the project, etc.



What is F.O.I.?

F.O.I or Access and Privacy are commonly used terms that refer to Ontario's Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The purpose of the Act is to create an open and accountable government by providing as much information as possible to the public, while ensuring that their personal privacy is protected.




Contact Us

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the Township of Muskoka Lakes Clerk's Department. We are happy to hear from you!

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Commonly Requested Information

Some examples of commonly requested information that must be processed through the MFIPPA Act are:

Property Standards Inspection Reports

Fire Incident Reports

Complaint records

Facilities booking information

Un-awarded tenders and tender submissions



What rights does the Act give me?

The right to access government information, including most general records, and personal information about yourself; and

The right to the protection of your own personal information which may be held within government records. However, there are certain types of information that cannot be released, which are called “exemptions” .



What are “Government Records”?

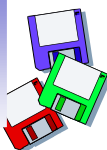
They are any recorded information in the hands of the government, regardless of format.

This includes any physical records (Paper, books, microfilm, maps, drawings, videos, CD's, etc.) or any electronic records (computer files, e-mails, internet sites, databases, etc.).

What is “Personal Information”?

Personal information is any recorded information about an identifiable individual. Personal Information is any information relating to an individual’s race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age sex, sexual orientation, education, medical, psychiatric, psychological, criminal, or employment history, fingerprints, blood type, name, address, phone number, personal opinions or views, or any other information that could lead to an accurate conclusion about the identity of another individual.

How is my personal Information Protected?



The Township is obligated to follow rules regarding how it handles personal information. These rules include:

- ♦ Using personal information ONLY for the purpose it was collected for, or for a similar purpose;
- ♦ Keeping personal information in secure systems, allowing you to review it and make any necessary corrections; and
- ♦ Disposing of personal information in a secure manner.

Information that is routinely available

Our goal is to be open, credible and accountable. All Township departments routinely release a variety of Information that is of interest to the public.

The list below sets out some examples of information available:

Assessment Information

By-laws,

Building reports, inspection reports (not complaint driven)

Budgets, Financial Statements and Tax Certificates

Committee of Adjustment and Variance decisions

Community information events and attractions,

Construction activity statistics

Council and Committee Agendas and Minutes

Development Activity charts, Maps

Fire prevention and public safety information

Historical and geological information

Library programs, Recreational programs etc.

Population/demographic information

Public meeting information

Zoning & Site Plan information

Staff reports



Will I get everything I ask for?

In many cases, full access is provided to the information. However, there are certain types of information that can be withheld under the Act. These are called exemptions and there are two types:

Mandatory exemptions include:

Someone else's personal information;
Inter-governmental relations; and
Information about a third party.

Discretionary Exemptions include:

Draft By-Laws, reports, and records of closed meetings;
Advice or recommendations;
Law enforcement;
Danger to Health & Safety;
Economic or other interests;
Limitations on access to own personal information;
Solicitor-client privilege; and
Information already published.

If we do withhold information under one or more of the exemptions, we will tell you why.

All requesters receive a letter outlining the decision, the reason for the decision and costs, etc.



How do I review my Personal Information?

There is no master file about you at the Township of Muskoka Lakes. If you've dealt with a department within the Township, they will probably have information about you. For example, if you have built a house, the Building Department will have your building information, the Finance Department will have your property tax information, etc. Once you determine who has the information you can simply call, visit or write to the appropriate department (s).



Can anyone see my Personal Information?

Most of the time, NO ONE except YOU can access your personal information. Only under very limited and specific circumstances can another person have access to your personal information without your consent.

For example, certain collections of personal information are actually public records and are accessible to all members of the public. Land registration records and Assessment Rolls are examples of this type of record.

How do I get the Information I want?

Just ask the Department you believe has the information you are looking for. In most situations, you will be given a copy of the information without having to submit a formal request under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. If you are denied access to the information, staff will explain why, and may suggest that you submit a formal request under the Act.

How do I submit a Formal F.O.I. Request?

Formal F.O.I. requests must be submitted in writing to the Clerks Department, attention of the Freedom of Information Officer or Deputy Clerk. You may send a letter or complete a F.O.I request form. Forms can be obtained from the office of the Township of Muskoka Lakes or on its website at www.muskokalakes.ca.

Your request should mention the Act, and needs to be as clear and specific as possible about what you want. Identify the type of records, where they are located and the timeframe that they cover. You should also indicate if you want to view the records or if you would like to receive copies.

How long does it take?

Under the Act, the Township must respond within 30 calendar days of receipt of your request. However, in the interest of good customer service, all requests are completed as quickly as possible. Where there is a large volume of records or it is necessary to consult with outside agencies, the Township may extend the 30 day time limit.

How much does it cost?

Your request must be accompanied by a \$5.00 application fee (cheques should be made payable to the Township of Muskoka Lakes). The fees under the Act are set by the Province. They are:

Application Fee	\$5.00
Search Time	\$7.50/15min.
Preparation Time	\$7.50/15min.
Computer Programming time	\$15.00/15min.
Floppy Disks/CD's/DVD's	\$10.00each
Photocopying	.20¢/page
Other Billed Costs	As Billed

For fees estimated to be over \$100.00, the Township can require a 50% deposit before starting to work on your request.