

Frequently Asked Questions on How Do I Make a FOIP Request?

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act aims to strike a balance between the public's right to know and the individual's right to privacy, as those rights relate to information held by public bodies in Alberta.

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1. BEFORE MAKING A FOIP REQUEST

Alberta's Freedom of *Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (the FOIP Act) provides a formal method of requesting information held by public bodies which is not available by other means.

The term "public bodies" is used in the FOIP Act to define which organizations fall within the scope of the Act. The definition includes departments, branches and offices of the Government of Alberta, as well as agencies, boards and commissions. The definition also includes "local public bodies" in the education, health care and local government sectors.

The Alberta FOIP Act does not apply to organizations outside the provincial public sector, such as departments of the Government of Canada, private-sector organizations such as banks and insurance companies, non-profit organizations, professional associations and trade unions.

You do not need to use the process provided under the FOIP Act to obtain access to the vast majority of information held by public bodies in Alberta. Information is often made routinely available by phone or through official publications and websites. Also, public bodies have policies that allow staff to provide certain categories of information on request.

Before making a FOIP request, it may be helpful to contact the public body concerned for advice on the most appropriate method of obtaining access to the information you need. If other methods do not satisfy your needs, a formal request for access to information under the FOIP Act ("a FOIP request") may be the best way to proceed.

Fees may be charged.

2. “GENERAL INFORMATION” OR “PERSONAL INFORMATION”

If you decide to make a FOIP request, you will have to specify whether you are seeking "general information" or "personal information."

A request for personal information is a request for your own personal information or for the personal information of an individual you are entitled to represent. "Personal information" is defined in the FOIP Act as "recorded information about an identifiable individual."

A request for general information is a request for any other kind of information, including the personal information of a third party.

If you are making a request for general information, there is an initial fee of \$25. Additional fees may be charged for processing costs in excess of \$150.

There is no fee for a request for personal information unless the cost of producing copies exceeds \$10.

3. IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT PUBLIC BODY AND THE RECORDS

A FOIP request should be submitted to the public body that has the information concerned.

If you're uncertain which public body has the information you need, contact the Freedom of Information and Privacy Coordinator (the "FOIP Coordinator") of the public body that seems most likely to have the information. If that public body does not have the information, the FOIP Coordinator may be able to refer you to the public body that does.

If you're uncertain what kind of records will provide the information you need, the FOIP Coordinator may also be able to assist you in producing a description of the records.

Contact information for FOIP Coordinators in the Government of Alberta and in local public bodies is provided in the [Directory of Public Bodies](#) on the FOIP website.

4. MAKING THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

A FOIP request must be made in writing. You may either complete a request form or write a letter to the public body indicating that you are making the request under the FOIP Act.

Copies of a request form are available from government and local public body offices and from public libraries. Alternatively, you can print the [Request to Access Information form](#) (pdf) that is provided on the FOIP website. Detailed instructions on how to complete the form are provided with the form.

Whether you are writing a letter or completing a request form, you will need to:

- Provide your name, address, and a telephone number where you can be contacted if there are any questions about the request.
- Be as specific as possible when describing the records you want to access.
- If you are requesting your own personal information, be sure to provide your full name and any other names that you have used in the past.
- If the request is for general information (not your own personal information), include the \$25 initial fee. This fee must be paid before the request will be processed.
- Sign and date the request form or letter.
- Send the completed request form or letter to the FOIP Coordinator of the public body most likely to have the information.

Public bodies will accept an oral request if you are not able to make a request in writing.

5. REQUESTING A CORRECTION TO PERSONAL INFORMATION

In addition to providing a right to access information held by public bodies, the FOIP Act also provides a right to request correction of personal information.

Routine changes or corrections to personal information such as a new address or new telephone number do not require a formal request under the Act. Simply contact the public body that has the information and inform them of the change or correction.

If you believe the information that a public body has about you is untrue or misleading, you can make a request under the Act to have it corrected. Even if the public body does not agree to change the information, it must make a note on your file that you have requested the change.

A request to correct personal information must be made in writing. You may either complete a request form or write a letter to the public body indicating that you are making the request under the FOIP Act.

Copies of a request form are available from government and local public body offices and from public libraries. Alternatively, you can print the [Request to Correct Personal Information form](#) (pdf) that is provided on the FOIP website. Detailed instructions on how to complete the form are provided with the form.

Whether you are writing a letter or completing a request form, you will need to:

- Provide your name, address, and a telephone number where you can be contacted if there are any questions about the request
- Identify the information that you believe is incorrect and give the correction. Be as specific as possible.

- Sign and date the request form or letter.
- Send the completed request form or letter to the FOIP Coordinator of the public body most likely to have the information.

Public bodies will accept an oral request if you are not able to make a request in writing.

6. WHEN TO EXPECT A RESPONSE

The FOIP Act requires public bodies to respond within 30 calendar days of receiving your request. The response will either provide the requested information or explain why the information is not being disclosed. In the case of a request for correction of personal information, the response will either state that the correction has been made or advise that the record has not been corrected but it has been annotated. The 30-day deadline may be extended if, for example, large volumes of records are involved or if third parties need to be consulted.

For more information contact:

► [Public Body's FOIP Coordinator](#)

► FOIP Help Desk

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Call toll free by dialing 310-0000 first

Fax: 780-427-1120

E-mail: foiphelpdesk@gov.ab.ca

Website: foip.alberta.ca

► Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

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Toll free: 1-888-878-4044

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E-mail: generalinfo@oipc.ab.ca

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► Queen's Printer

Edmonton: (780) 427-4952

Call toll free by dialing 310-0000 first

E-mail: qp@gov.ab.ca

Website: qp.alberta.ca

- *FOIP Act and Regulation*

- *FOIP Guidelines and Practices*

- *Annotated FOIP Act*