

# Information Disclosure & Privacy Protection

## Introduction

The “[Frequently Asked Questions](#)” which follow give an overview of our information disclosure and privacy protection practices, including how to submit a freedom of information request to BC Assessment. You will also find information on how BC Assessment protects your privacy.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### 1. What kinds of information can I request?

You have the right to request any record in the custody or under the control of BC Assessment, whether it may be in one of our area offices or at our Head Office in Victoria. That being said, some portions of records or records in their entirety are protected from release under the *FOIPP Act* or under the *Assessment Act*.

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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### 2. When do I use the *FOIPP Act* to request information?

If you have made an informal request for the information and have not received the information you requested, you can make a formal request for that information under the *FOIPP Act*.

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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### 3. How do I make a request?

#### Informal requests:

We recommend that you should always start by making an informal request. To do this, please contact the office that you think might have the information you are looking for.

➔ [View BC Assessment Area Office listing](#)

#### Freedom of Information (FOI) requests:

You may make an FOI request for records containing the information you requested if you are told it is not routinely available for release to the public. Your FOI request must be made in writing (except in limited circumstances) and must specify whether you want to receive a copy of the records or to view the records in person.

If you wish, you may use our [FOI Request for Access to Records Form](#).

You may deliver, mail, fax or e-mail your FOI request in writing to the following:

- ➔ address: Information Disclosure & Privacy Protection  
BC Assessment  
400 – 3450 Uptown Blvd.  
Victoria, BC V8Z 0B9  
Attention: Information Disclosure and Privacy Protection Analyst
- ➔ fax: 250-595-2261
- ➔ e-mail: [Sarah.Bonner@bcassessment.ca](mailto:Sarah.Bonner@bcassessment.ca)

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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### 4. Is there a fee to process my information request?

#### Informal requests:

When you make an informal request for information, the area office which has this information may charge you a fee. Whether or not a fee is charged is dependent upon:

- ➔ who is requesting the record (for example, a property owner or a third party);

- ➔ when the information is being requested (for example, certain information is available free of charge when you're considering an appeal of, or have appealed, an assessment; and,
- ➔ what is being requested (for example, a Property Value Summary).

For example, while a property owner may receive a Property Value Summary (PVS) for free for their own property, that property owner will need to pay a fee to receive a PVS for a property owned by someone else.

### **FOI requests:**

BC Assessment may charge you a fee to cover the cost of processing your FOI request. We will not charge you a fee to access your own personal information or for the first three hours spent searching for and retrieving other records. If we are going to charge you any fees, we will send you a fee estimate before processing your request. We may also require you to send us a deposit before we will process your request.

The maximum fees that may be charged to provide records are set out in Section 7 of the Schedule of Maximum Fees in the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Regulation](#).

To reduce fees and to minimize taxpayer expense, please define your request as much as possible so that the records you are requesting may be readily identified. For example, if possible, please let us know:

- ➔ what kind(s) of record(s) you are requesting;
- ➔ which property the record(s) pertain to; and,
- ➔ a date or year range.

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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## **5. How will BC Assessment respond to my request?**

### **Informal requests:**

When you make an informal request, the office you approach will respond to you as quickly as possible. Depending upon the kind of information you are requesting and your relationship to that information (for example, you are a property owner wanting information on your own property), we may be able to mail, fax or e-mail the information to you. If you visit the office, we may be able to provide a copy to you personally.

### **FOI requests:**

The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP Act)* requires that we respond to your FOI request within 30 working days of receiving it. We may extend this time in some circumstances, such as when we need to consult with another public body.

The *FOIPP Act* permits us to withhold information if its release would be an invasion of personal privacy or cause harm by one of the means listed in the *FOIPP Act*, such as harm to the business interests of a third party or harm to individual or public safety. If we withhold any record or part of a record, you have the right to ask for a review by the British Columbia Information and Privacy Commissioner, who is an officer of the provincial Legislature independent of the government. A decision of the Commissioner is final, subject to judicial review.

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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## **6. What is personal information?**

Personal information is any information about an identifiable individual, including their name. Examples of personal information include (but are not limited to): name, address, phone number, Social Insurance Number, driver's license number, health information, employment history, educational background, financial status, opinions expressed by a person, political affiliation, or religion. An exception to personal information is the work contact information for public employees, including BC Assessment staff.

BC Assessment collects personal information only if it is required to do so by law, if the collection is necessary to enable us to fulfill our responsibilities under the *Assessment Act* and the *Assessment Authority Act*. The legal authority for collecting personal information is contained within Section 26 of the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, \[RSBC 1996\] Chapter 165](#).

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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## **7. How do I request access to my personal information?**

BC Assessment does not have files on individuals, but rather on the property an individual owns or leases, if it is Crown land, municipal land or otherwise exempt land. If we have your personal information, it may be contained in a number of different hardcopy or electronic files. If you believe that we have personal information about you which you would like to see, you should contact the [BC Assessment office](#) where you think this personal information is located and ask for that information. To minimize expense, please specify what kind of information you are requesting. You should not make an FOI request for your personal information unless you are unable to get what you need through informal channels.

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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## 8. Is my personal information protected?

The *FOIPP Act* requires that BC Assessment protect personal privacy by restricting the collection, use and disclosure of personal information. Please note that only individuals have personal privacy rights; businesses or other organizations do not.

### Collection:

We only collect personal information when the collection is related directly to and is necessary for fulfilling our obligations under the *Assessment Act*. When we collect personal information, we must do so directly from you, unless we have the legal authority to collect the information from another source. These rules apply even if the personal information is held by another government body.

### Use and Disclosure:

Unless there is legal authority to do otherwise, BC Assessment uses personal information only for the purpose for which it was collected or for a use consistent with that purpose. We have security arrangements to protect personal information from unauthorized use or disclosure.

For example, the *Assessment Act* requires that we make publicly available at each area assessment office a copy of the assessment roll. Although an *Assessment Authority Act* Regulation requires that the assessment roll must contain the name of the owner, BC Assessment prohibits members of the public from conducting a property search of the assessment roll at area offices using owner name.

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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## 9. What if I think BC Assessment has incorrect information about me?

If you believe there is an error or omission in your personal information, you have the right to ask us to correct it. We will consider your request and respond to you as soon as possible.

For more information, you may contact BC Assessment by way of:

- ➔ telephone: 250-595-6211 local 282
- ➔ e-mail: [Sarah.Bonner@bcassessment.ca](mailto:Sarah.Bonner@bcassessment.ca)
- ➔ fax: 250-595-2261

➔ mail: Information Disclosure & Privacy Protection  
BC Assessment  
400 – 3450 Uptown Blvd.  
Victoria, BC V8Z 0B9  
Attention: Information Disclosure and Privacy Protection Analyst

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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## **10. What kind of information may be collected when I visit BC Assessment's website?**

If you visit BC Assessment's web site to browse, read pages, or download information, the following information is automatically collected and stored:

- the Internet Protocol Address and domain name used. The Internet Protocol address is a numerical identifier assigned either to your internet service provider or directly to your computer. This address can be translated to determine the domain name of your service provider (for example: gov.bc.ca, xcompany.com or yourschool.edu);
- the type of browser and operating system; and,
- the date and time of the visit.

The information which is automatically collected is used for purposes such as assessing our system's performance, improving web services and web site management. BC Assessment does not use this data to determine your identity unless required to do so as part of an internal investigation or law enforcement purpose.

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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## **11. Does the BC Assessment website use Cookies to collect my personal information?**

No. BC Assessment does not use Cookies to collect or to store your personal information.

A Cookie is a small file stored on your computer by your web browser when using some internet sites. There are two types of Cookies:

- ➔ Persistent Cookies: can store personal information such as your name, e-mail address, home or work address, or telephone number. Persistent Cookies can use this type of personal information to identify you whenever you access a website.

- ➔ Sessional Cookies: do not store personal information, are used to help you move around a website and, as such, are valid only during the time you are actually using the website.

Consequently, while the BC Assessment website may use Sessional Cookies (which do not store personal information), we do not use Persistent Cookies (which may store personal information).

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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## **12. Where can I get more information about the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP Act)*?**

The following are useful sources of information:

The [Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner](#) of British Columbia (OIPC). This office is responsible for enforcing the *FOIPP Act* by reviewing the decisions and other actions of public bodies.

The Provincial Government's [Knowledge and Information Services Branch](#) maintains cross-government policy and procedures, standards and guidelines on access to information and protection of privacy. It also provides support to public bodies to assist them in complying with the *FOIPP Act*.

Questions about how BC Assessment administers its obligations under the *FOIPP Act* may be directed to:

Mail: Information Disclosure & Privacy Protection  
BC Assessment  
400 – 3450 Uptown Blvd.  
Victoria, BC V8Z 0B9

Telephone: 250-595-6211 ext 282

Fax: 250-595-2261

E-mail: [Sarah.Bonner@bcassessment.ca](mailto:Sarah.Bonner@bcassessment.ca)

[\[FAQs\]](#)

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