



Report
Staff Report
 The Corporation of the City of Brampton
 4/10/2024

Date: 2024-03-25

Subject: Annual Report on the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Program for 2023

Contact: Shelley Campbell, Access & Privacy Coordinator, Legislative Services

Report number: Legislative Services-2024-296

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the report titled: **Annual Report on the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Program for 2023**, to the Council Meeting of April 10, 2024, be received.

OVERVIEW:

This report provides:

- An overview of Brampton's Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Program; and,
- Statistical information on Brampton's Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Program for 2023, as reported to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC).

BACKGROUND:

Statutory Obligations:

In line with the principles of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)* and the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the City of Brampton is committed to increased transparency in communication throughout several means.

Key principles of *MFIPPA* require the City to provide the public a right of access to information under its control, while protecting personal information held by the City. In safeguarding personal information, the City is required to apply necessary exemptions from the right of access. However, such exemptions are required to be limited and specific.

MFIPPA came into effect on January 1, 1991. The *Act* provides access to information rights balanced with privacy protection. It applies to all municipalities in Ontario and to various other local government boards including the Brampton Public Library and Downtown Brampton BIA. The *Act* does not apply to private companies, court records, records in archives, credit bureaus, hospitals, and doctors' records. Separate, yet similar legislation applies to the federal government and provincial governments, including their respective agencies and institutions.

The purposes of the *Act* are:

1. To provide a right of public access to information in the custody and under the control of a municipality, in accordance with the principles that,
 - i. information should be made available to the public,
 - ii. necessary exemptions from the right of access should be limited and specific, and
 - iii. decisions on the disclosure of information should be reviewed independently of the municipality controlling the information; and,
2. To protect individual personal information and allow an individual access to their own personal information held by the municipality.

The *Act* sets out legally binding requirements for:

1. Providing public access to information under municipal control through access to information requests (informally known as a freedom of information, or FOI requests); and,
2. The collection, use, disclosure, and disposal of personal information.

Responsibility of the "Head"

Under *MFIPPA*, responsibility for compliance with the *Act* rests with the "Head" of an institution (for purposes of the legislation, a municipality is an "institution"). Council is the "Head" under the *Act* unless it designates to another individual within the institution. Council designated the powers and duties of the Head to the City Clerk by By-law No.102-90, subsequently included in Administrative Authority By-law 216-2017 and reaffirmed at the January 27, 2021, City Council Meeting.

The responsibilities of the Head with respect to requests for access to information include:

- Receiving and clarifying requests to access records.
- Adhering to time limits and notification requirements.
- Considering representations from third parties.
- Determining if any legislated exemptions to disclosure apply and formulating a decision on access.
- Determining the method of disclosure.
- Calculating and collecting prescribed fees; and,
- Where necessary, defending decisions made under the *Act* at an appeal.

The responsibilities of the Head with respect to privacy protection include ensuring that:

- The City has both the legal authority to collect personal information and the consent of the affected individual(s) prior to collecting the information.
- The collection of personal information is minimized and only information necessary to the proper delivery of programs and services is collected.
- Once collected, personal information is not retained longer than necessary to fulfil the stated purpose as identified in the Records Retention By-Law 272-2014 (amended by By-Law 183-2015), except where required by legislation.
- Safeguards are in place to prevent unauthorized access or inappropriate destruction of the personal information; and,
- Individuals are provided with a process to access their own personal information, and to request correction of that information, where appropriate.

In addition, the Head is required to report annually to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC), providing statistical information on:

- i. The number and types of access requests received, the decisions made on those requests, and fees charged; and,
- ii. The number of requests to correct personal information received.

The Annual report for 2023 was filed with the IPC on February 26, 2024.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Access to Information

Program Overview

The Access to Information (also known as Freedom of Information, or FOI) program allows individuals to request access to City records that are not otherwise available to the public. When an individual requests access to a record, the legislation requires that the record be disclosed unless a legislated exclusion or exemption to disclosure applies.

The purpose of the program is to present the City as more open and transparent, which allows residents to better participate in the democratic process.

The program includes:

- Processing formal access to information requests;
- Training staff across the organization on legislated requirements;
- Coaching staff on the disclosure of particular records; and,
- Assisting staff to develop sound processes for the routine and proactive disclosure of information.

Annual Statistics

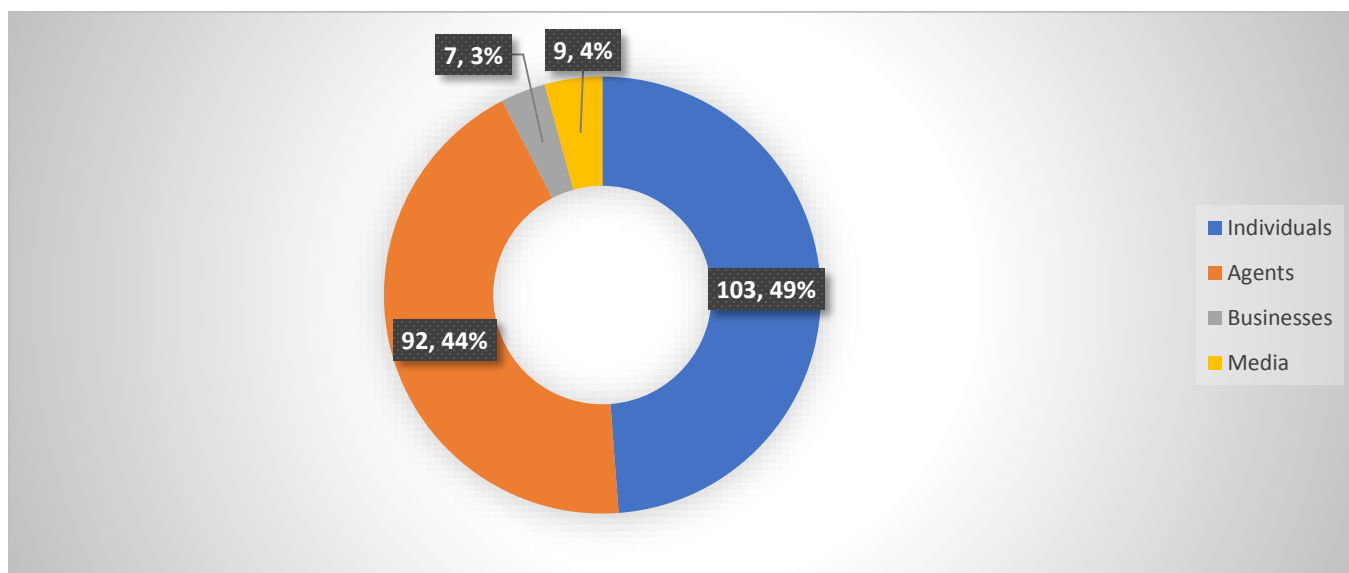
The City of Brampton received 216 new requests to access information under *MFIPPA* in 2023 and processed 211 requests of the same year.

Requests are not always processed in the calendar year in which they are received, particularly when a request is received late in the year. Also, third party appeals, and payment fee delays were another reason for requests to be carried over into 2024.

The volume of access requests continues to rise. Over the past 5 years, the number of requests has seen a marked increase.

Year	# Requests
2023	216
2022	168
2021	182
2020	158
2019	145

The processed requests received from individual members of the public were 103, 92 were received from agents or representatives of the requestors, 9 were received from businesses and 7 were processed from the media.



MFIPPA requires that access to information requests be processed within 30 calendar days. The City's basic compliance rate in 2023 was 88.15%. The legislation permits time extensions for voluminous requests and where third-party consultations are required.

Appeals:

A decision of the Head for the institution is appealable to the IPC by the requestor, and in some cases by an affected party. The IPC appeal process includes mediation as a first step to resolve an appeal, followed by adjudication, if necessary.

Ten (10) appeals of the City's decisions were filed with the IPC for the 2023 requests. Eight (8) appeals involved a third-party appealing against disclosure of their corporate information, and the remaining two (2) appeals involved disclosure of the name of an animal owner. Three (3) appeals were abandoned as the requester failed to meet IPC's deadline. The remaining seven (7) are currently pending for response from the IPC.

Privacy

Program Overview

The Privacy Officer is responsible for providing consultative support and advice on risk and obligations as the subject matter expert on privacy and access for the organization, especially as it pertains to *MFIPPA*.

It is often necessary for the City to collect personal information (information that pertains to an identifiable individual) to provide programs and services to its residents. *MFIPPA* establishes that individuals have the right to control how their personal information is collected and used, and restricts how the City may collect, use and disclose this information. The purpose of the City's privacy program is to:

- Ensure compliance with the legislation,
- Mitigate privacy-related risks; and,
- Build the public's trust and confidence in the City.

The program includes:

- Privacy Risk Assessments (PRAs),
- Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs),
- Publishing Guidance Documents,
- Training staff across the organization on legislated requirements (in-person and e-learning formats available),
- Coaching staff on privacy-related matters, and;
- Investigating privacy incidents, complaints, and breaches.

Annual Statistics – Privacy:

No requests to correct personal information were received by the City in 2023.

Fifty (50) Privacy Risk Assessments (PRAs) were received by the Access and Privacy Team in 2023. These were assessed, and in twenty-eight (28) situations, personal information was involved, requiring an in-depth review. Eleven (11) of the 28 PRA's required a formal review process, known as a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA).

Three (3) privacy incidents were reported to the Access and Privacy team in 2023 which was deemed to be a privacy breaches. The IPC was notified of 1 breach, and not notified of the other 2, as the breaches were minor in nature, and remedial actions were implemented to improve processes.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

To ensure the municipality complies with its obligations under *MFIPPA*, the Access and Privacy Coordinators will:

- Continue to work with all departments in response to access to information requests.
- Provide coaching and training on access and privacy to all departments.
- Conduct Privacy Impact Assessments on new and/or enhanced services, technologies, and/or systems that involve the collection or use of personal information; and,
- Investigate all privacy incidents and implement remedial processes as appropriate.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Other Implications:

Nil.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA:

MFIPPA promotes government accountability and transparency by providing a right of access to information while protecting the personal privacy of individuals. Access to information and protection of privacy is central to a customer-oriented corporate culture. This report achieves the Term of Council Priority of a Well-run City by contributing to a climate of government accountability and service excellence.

CONCLUSION:

The City is subject to *MFIPPA* and must comply with the legislation. The City Clerk is appointed by Council as Head under *MFIPPA* and exercises the powers and duties of the Head in accordance with the *Act*. The City Clerk will continue to report to Council regularly to provide annual statistical information on the access to information and privacy program, information on appeals to the IPC, and program updates.

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Attachments:

- Nil.