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SECTION: Access to Information

INDEX NO.: I150-500

TITLE: Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ("FOIPOP") - How to Obtain Information

APPROVED BY: The Superintendent of Pensions

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The law in Ontario, in keeping with a philosophy of openness and access to information maintained by the government, provides that such information may be accessed by a request or if the request meets the standards of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1987* (the "FOIPOP").

People may apply under FOIPOP through a process controlled by the FOIPOP Co-ordinators in each government ministry. In the case of information maintained by the Pension Commission, requesters will make application through the Ministry of Finance FOIPOP Office. Contact Ron Ward, Assistant Co-ordinator, Information and Privacy Office, 30th Floor, 250 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2N7 or call 416-325-8369 or fax 416-327-0941. (*Editor's note: This contact has changed since publication of article in the February 1990 issue of the Bulletin and is updated for the convenience of readers.*)

The role of the Co-ordinator is to assist you in making your request, to determine if the information requested exists, and if so, whether the information requested can be disclosed in light of legal precedents and information and privacy issues.

Upon receipt of a request for information, the Co-ordinator will liaise with the PCO staff person appointed as the Liaison Officer. The Officer's function is to clarify requirements and determine the accessibility of the information requested. The Officer may also be asked by the Co-ordinator to assess time and resources needed to fulfil a request, but the Officer will not make any judgements concerning the merit of the request or offer any recommendations.

In turn, the Co-ordinator will advise the requestor whether the information can be disclosed and if any identifying information will be severed from the documents before its release. The Co-ordinator will also advise whether any charges (the legislation provides for charging costs) will be incurred. On the basis of this information, the requestor will advise the Co-ordinator whether or not to proceed with the preparation of information requested.

In certain instances, it may be practical to contact the FOIPOP Liaison Officer at the PCO directly before initiating a request for information to ensure the information requirements are clearly expressed and understood.

For specific details for making a formal request, please refer to the FOIPOP Interim Administrative Practice on page 8, (Index no. I150-600) and the summary of the decision of the Information and Privacy Commissioner in respect of Appeal Number 880334 (Lerner Decision) in the Decisions section of Bulletin 1/1.