



Access & Privacy

HRM Volunteer Boards & Committees



As a Volunteer Committee member, should you be concerned about access and privacy?

Yes - All employees, elected officials, contractors and volunteers have a legislated responsibility for access and privacy through the MGA and through HRM's Privacy Policy and Routine Access Policy.

As a volunteer member on a board and/or committee, any records that you create or have in your possession that relate to the business of the board or committee are considered to be corporate records and can be requested. They are not your personal records even if the records were sent from your personal email address. The content of the records and the fact that it relates to your participation and activities on the board or committee makes it a corporate record. You should not expect any privacy when you are creating records as a volunteer board or committee member. Always create records with access in mind. You need to be prepared to see what you write in an email on the front page of the newspaper or scanned and available on the internet.

For further information on your access and privacy responsibilities, please contact HRM's Access & Privacy Officer at 490-4390 or by email at accessandprivacy@halifax.ca

Do volunteers have privacy obligations?

Yes - Volunteers, who during the performance of their duties, receive access to personal information have a responsibility to protect that information, to only use it for the purpose for which it was intended and must take appropriate measures to ensure the personal information is protected and not inappropriately disclosed.

Please refrain from:

- leaving records containing personal information in your car, in your home or in areas where others may have access to it.
- discussing personal information of others in open areas
- disclosing an individual's personal information during a public meeting without their written consent.

By volunteering to sit on a HRM committee or board not only are you fully participating in ensuring the mandate of the board or committee is achieved but you are also ensuring that HRM meets its legislated and corporate responsibilities and commitment for being open and accountable and for the protection of personal information.



What is access & privacy?

The Municipal Government Act (MGA), which provides authority for most of the activities and operations of municipal governments in Nova Scotia, also contains provisions relating to access and privacy. These provisions are found in Part XX of the Act.

The guiding purpose of access and privacy is:

- Access to Information – provides the public with the right to request a copy of any record within the custody or control of a municipal public body
- Protection of Privacy – provides individuals with the right to access their own personal information and prevents the unauthorized collection, use and disclosure of that information.

During the course of conducting municipal business, a great deal of information is produced and accumulated. The legislation supports the belief that every record held by a municipal body, is subject to release. There are limited exemptions from release which are designed to:

- protect against the unreasonable invasion of personal privacy
- prevent unfair advantages occurring in commercial or government transactions
- protect law enforcement activities
- safeguard the business conducted by government.

What is a “municipality and a municipal public body” under Part XX of the MGA?

The Act defines a municipality as a regional municipality and defines a municipal public body as a committee, community council, agency, authority, board or commission that either have a majority of the members appointed by the municipality or the body is under the authority of the municipality.

What is considered a record under the legislation?

Anything recorded in any form is considered a record. This includes:

- written & post-it notes
- typed reports, correspondence, notes, etc.
- e-mails including any text messaging or other forms of electronic communication
- notebooks, day-timers, journals, etc.
- office and working files
- invoices, expense claims, accounting records, etc.
- any piece of information capable of reproduction
- maps, drawings, photos, audio files or video tapes, etc.

What is personal information?

Information about an identifiable individual is considered to be personal information. This includes:

- name
- address
- phone number
- email address
- characteristics
- status
- an identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to an individual – SIN, employee #
- educational & employment history
- personal history
- opinions
- references about an individual
- an individual’s own views or opinions .

HRM is committed to being an open and accountable government and to protecting the privacy of personal information.