

Ontario is committed to respecting your privacy and protecting your personal information. This Privacy Statement explains the current information management practices on our websites.

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### **Our commitment**

We are committed to protecting your privacy whether you are browsing for information or conducting business with the government through electronic channels. The handling of all personal information by Government of Ontario organizations is governed by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The Ministry of Health and Long-term Care also ensures that your personal health information is private, confidential and secure through the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

When you visit our websites, we will not collect your personal information unless you choose to use and receive online products and services that require it. For transactions with government organizations involving credit cards, government systems use up-to-date security protocols to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of information and systems.

### **You have a choice**

If you choose not to use the Internet to provide personal information to a government ministry or agency, you can contact the ministry or agency telephone, fax, mail or in person. (Not all options may be available in every situation.)

### **Cookies**

Some Government of Ontario websites use cookies. Cookies are generally used to make it more convenient for users to move around our websites. If you choose, they may be used to 'remember' your password and make it easier and faster to log-in to certain sites. These types of cookies need to be stored on your computer's hard drive. Cookies used by the government are encrypted to make the information in cookies unreadable to anyone except the government organization with which you are dealing.

### **Web analytics**

In order to serve you better, we use web analytics services including Google Analytics and Webtrends to help analyse the use of our websites. These tools use cookies to collect and generate information about your visits to our sites (including your IP address) that is transmitted to their servers in an anonymous form for processing. We study patterns of website activity so we can improve the experience of visitors to our sites.

The use of these tools does not allow us or our analytics service providers to identify individuals.

You can opt-out of analytics activity by setting your browser to notify you when a cookie is sent and block analytics cookies if desired. Please consult your browser's Help Menu for instructions. Visiting our website with analytics cookies disabled will have no significant impact on your browsing experience.

Google currently offers a free Google Analytics opt-out tool for Internet Explorer (versions 7 and 8), Google Chrome (4.x and higher), and Mozilla Firefox (3.5 and higher).

### **Privacy statement details**

Thank you for visiting a Government of Ontario website and reviewing our online Privacy Statement in detail. Respecting your privacy and protecting your personal information in an online environment is a priority for us. The Ontario government's management of personal information is governed by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). Service providers under contract to provide online services on behalf of the government must follow the practices required of Government of Ontario organizations.

This Privacy Statement explains our current practices regarding what information government ministries and agencies may collect, use, and secure when you visit our websites. In addition, some government organizations may post further detailed statements related to their specific programs. Those statements supplement this Privacy Statement.

### **Our privacy statement covers the following topics:**

#### **What kind of information is collected when you visit our websites?**

When you browse or download information from Government of Ontario websites, our servers automatically collect limited amounts of standard information for traffic monitoring and statistical purposes. The information is analyzed for operational trends, performance, and for ways to improve our sites. The government cannot identify you from this information.

#### **We collect the following standard types of information:**

- Internet Protocol (IP) addresses of the computers being used to access our sites
- operating systems and the types and versions of browsers used to access our sites
- Internet Service Providers used by visitors to our sites
- dates and times users access our sites
- pages visited
- keywords users enter into our search engine
- names and sizes of files requested

Government websites collect the above noted information to provide citizens with access to information and services available on our websites. The Government of Ontario's computer systems use hardware and software to anonymously monitor unauthorized attempts to upload or change information at government websites, disrupt service, or otherwise cause damage. As a general practice, we make no attempt to link this information with the identity of individuals visiting our sites. If an attempt to damage our site has been detected, we can take further actions.

#### **What happens when you send us personal information online?**

You may choose to provide us with personal information such as your name, address, phone number, e-mail address and credit card number, if you wish to:

- submit an e-mail, comment, question or request or subscribe for information online
- request a service, product, or fill out a registration or licence form online
- provide feedback, participate in consultations or surveys online
- conduct e-commerce transactions with a ministry or agency

When you visit a government organization's website, any personal information you provide will be used to respond to your message and/or provide you with the requested service or product. The collection of personal information by government organizations must be in accordance with section 38(2) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). This section of the Act requires government organizations to collect only the personal information that is necessary for the administration of a government program. At the time the information is collected, you will be informed of the specific purpose for which it is being collected.

### **How do we use cookies?**

Some government websites use cookies. A cookie is a small text file sent from a Web server and placed on your computer's hard drive. A cookie is generally used to enhance your browsing experience. You can choose to set your browser to detect and reject cookies, to accept cookies from all sites, or to prompt you whenever a site wants to send you a cookie. Check your browser's "Help" files to learn how to do this. If you choose to refuse cookies, you may not be able to access some of the interactive features on our websites.

Cookies used by the Government of Ontario, do not give us access to anything on your hard drive and cannot do anything to your computer. Cookies used by the Government are encrypted for security purposes to make any information in the cookie unreadable to anyone except the government organization with which you are dealing. Ontario government organizations use two types of cookies: session cookies (temporary) or persistent cookies (longer-term continuing use).

- session cookies may be used to support on-line feedback/discussion, forms and registration and 'e-commerce/shopping cart' transactions - they are used only during your online session and expire when you close your browser. Without session cookies, moving around our Web sites could be much slower

- persistent cookies are different from session cookies because they are stored on your computer's hard drive for some length of time - they are usually used if you want us to remember information about your Web preferences (e.g. large font) and passwords for automatic log-in purposes

Further information on 'cookies' is at the website of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario: If you wanted to know...What to do about Cookies.

### **Who is accountable for the protection of privacy?**

The ministers of government ministries and agencies are responsible for the administration of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). The Act requires government organizations to protect the personal information in their possession. The Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) oversees whether government organizations comply with the access and privacy provisions of the Act by investigating privacy complaints and hearing appeals regarding access decisions made by ministries.

### **Security**

The government's security practices are continually evolving to ensure that the integrity and confidentiality of information and systems are maintained. The government uses up-to-date security safeguards to protect its networks and websites from misuse, alteration, copying, disclosure, destruction, monitoring or unauthorized sharing of information and damage. The government's safeguards include the use of security software and encryption protocols and involve physical, technical and procedural controls to protect information behind the government firewall.

### **How can I access and correct my personal information?**

Some government online services may provide the ability for Internet users to correct their own information online. Individuals also have a right to access their personal information that is held by an Ontario government organization by making an access request under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). Access is subject to limits and exceptions outlined in FIPPA.

For more information on the process for accessing your personal information, you may wish to view the Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) website: [Accessing Personal Information](#). You can check what types of personal information may be held by government ministries and agencies by browsing the Directory of Records on the Ministry of Government Services Access and Privacy website. You can request that government organizations correct inaccurate or incomplete information.

### **What steps can I take to protect my online activities?**

Users are encouraged to learn about protecting their own computers to ensure that their online activities remain private. One place to start for tips on home network security is a Question and Answer sheet produced by the Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute - CERT Coordination Center.

### **Who can I contact for further information?**

Questions or comments regarding these practices or the administration of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) in Government of Ontario ministries and agencies, may be directed to the Information, Privacy and Archives Division, Ministry of Government Services, by e-mailing [Web.Foi.MGCS@ontario.ca](mailto:Web.Foi.MGCS@ontario.ca) or calling 416-212-7061 or writing to:

### **Office of the Chief Privacy Officer and Archivist of Ontario**

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