

## **Recap**

For this assignment, you will need to file **5 informal requests and 1 formal request for each level of government: municipal, provincial, and federal**. So in total, **5 informal requests, and 3 formal requests**.

### **INFORMAL REQUESTS:**

An Informal request means that some wonderful human before you requested records from the government and these records have been released. So, you don't need to pay any money to get these records. All you need to do is ask for them to be sent to you.

- **Please note: Informal requests are ONLY made publicly available by the government on the FEDERAL level**

Use this form to get your 5 informal requests done for this assignment:

[https://open.canada.ca/en/search/ati?\\_ga=2.69692565.406018153.1536604353-1818651053.1522773341&&search\\_api\\_fulltext=&sort\\_by=year&sort\\_order=DESC](https://open.canada.ca/en/search/ati?_ga=2.69692565.406018153.1536604353-1818651053.1522773341&&search_api_fulltext=&sort_by=year&sort_order=DESC)

### **FORMAL REQUESTS:**

**Formal requests (FOIs or ATIPs) are requests that have NOT been previously released. You need to pay \$5 to request them through a government portal or an institution portal that is subject to the Information and Privacy Act.**

Here are the links to the government portals you can file a **FORMAL** Freedom of Information Request from:

1. Federal: <https://atip-aiprp.tbs-sct.gc.ca/>
2. Provincial (Ontario):  
<https://www.sus.gov.on.ca/lc/content/mgcs/profiles/default.html?contentRoot=repository:///Applications/ON00089/1.0/Assets&template=ON00089E.xdp&submitUrl=https://localhost:12443/rest/services/ON00089/Processes/SubmitForm&lang=E&submitServiceProxy=https://www.sus.gov.on.ca/sub-proxy/all>
3. Municipal (City of Toronto):  
<https://foi.toronto.ca/POSWeb/POSItemDetails.aspx?positemkey=10283>
  - a. If the link above doesn't work go here: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/access-city-information-or-records/freedom-of-information/> and you will find a button to the portal under point #3.

JN 8103: Memo on FOI Assignment

Due Date: September 23<sup>st</sup> 11:59pm

**TIP:** Make sure you do some research on what government department you want to file a request to.

- **Example:** Don't request information regarding universities from the Ontario Ministry of Education. That's the wrong department. The Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities is the correct department.

**TIP:** Some institutions you can request an FOI from have their own portal separate from the government

- **Example:** Don't request information about Canada Post – a Crown Corporation – from the Federal Government FOI portal. If you do some legwork (a simple google search), you'll see that Canada Post has its own FOI portal.
- **Another example:** Don't request information about the TTC from the City of Toronto. A quick google search shows that TTC has its own FOI portal.

The link below is a list of Federal Departments you can request an FOI from:

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/access-information-privacy/access-information/information-about-programs-information-holdings/sources-federal-government-employee-information.html>

The link below is a list of **Provincial AND municipal departments** you can request an FOI from:

- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/directory-institutions>

**TIP:** For your municipal request, you don't have to request with the City of Toronto. You can request a different city if you'd like, or an institution within a city like a university, a school board, the TTC, or a hospital. Institutions like the TTC or a university will have their own FOI request portals – if you do a quick google search, you should be able to find them pretty easily. **If you want to confirm that a city institution is subject to the information and privacy act, just use the link I pasted above to see if it's on the list.**

## FORMAL REQUESTS: WHAT TO ASK FOR

Here are some examples of what kind of records you can ask for in a formal request:

1. Expense Records
  - How much money was spent by government not included in regular public info, such as travel expenses, meals, air travel, etc.
2. Police, Justice, and Security Records
3. Memos, Briefing Notes, Reports, and Studies
  - Help to show inner workings of government decision making
4. Correspondence
  - Letters, emails, phone calls, etc. - can help figure out relationship government has to other agencies and amongst politicians
5. Test Results
  - Water safety, health and food inspections, etc.
6. Public Safety/Inspection Records

## FORMAL REQUESTS: WORDING

For a formal request, YOU will be the one asking the government for information. So, you need to write out what you want to get. **Please read Chapter 10 of Digging Deeper to help with this.**

Some general tips:

- You will need to provide a timeframe for the records you wish to receive. Try and keep it short and sweet. Anything over a year can mean hefty fees, long extensions, etc. So keep a shorter timeframe. I'd probably opt for a 6 month timeframe.
- Ask for "records" NOT "documents" because "records" means everything from PowerPoint presentations to videos to data
- You may want to throw in a line such as "please exclude obvious cabinet confidences" or something similar so that you don't receive a document back that is fully redacted. I also like to throw in a line that says "also please exclude duplicate documents in French" because some requests I've gotten back give you the same document with an English version and a French version.

## FORMAL REQUESTS: THE BRIEFING NOTE EXAMPLE

In class, David walked us through an example of filing a **FEDERAL** formal access-to-information request for briefing notes. Here are some points of clarification:

1. You can request briefing notes on ANY government level. However, on the FEDERAL level, you have access to this handy database: <https://search.open.canada.ca/briefingt/>
  - a. This database regularly releases briefing note titles and numbers on the Federal government level. What does that mean?
    - i. It means that if you want to do a very easy **FORMAL REQUEST** on the **FEDERAL LEVEL**, you can use that database and find briefing notes that interest you, and you can specifically request them by **name and reference number**. Since you're paying \$5 for the request, you can request multiple briefing notes in one request. If you do that, make sure the briefing notes are from the same department.
      1. You can't request a briefing note from Health Canada, the CRA, and Canadian Heritage in one request because they are all different departments. You can, however, request 3 briefing notes from Health Canada within one request.

You DON'T have to request briefing notes if you don't want to. This is just an easy way to get your federal request done. **For municipal and provincial requests, you will have to write out your request since there is no database of briefing note titles you can just look at and ask to be released.**

Hope this helps!