



August 28, 2014

Office of the Information and
Privacy Commissioner
PO Box 9038
4th Floor — 947 Fort Street
Victoria, BC V8W 9A4

BY E Mail: info@oipc.bc.ca

Dear Commissioner:

**RE: Request for investigation into excessive collection of information by
police forces in employment applications**

I am writing to ask you to conduct an investigation under s.42 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (“the Act”) into the conduct of several police departments in this province regarding the collection of unnecessary, inappropriate and excessive personal information from individuals applying for both paid and unpaid positions with these departments.

The application we have obtained is entitled Integrity and Lifestyle Questionnaire-Civilian, and a copy is attached for your review. Although we were first informed about this in the context of an application to the Delta Police Department for an unpaid volunteer position with a Community Police office, we have found similar documents online on the websites of a number of other municipal forces. Links are attached in an appendix to this complaint.

The Questionnaire is 25 pages long, asks extremely personal questions about sexual activity, drug use, finances and if the applicant has ever been unemployed or on welfare.

The Questionnaire ends with the statement that:

“All issues must be disclosed in advance of the polygraph examination and background investigation. Deceit, dishonest or non-disclosure concerning questions in this document may result in your disqualification from current or future civilian employment opportunities....”

.../2

This kind of statement encourages respondents to disclose further personal information even when it is not specifically asked for, so as to avoid appearing 'deceitful' if something they considered irrelevant turns out to be relevant.

Police departments are covered by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)*. Section 26 of FIPPA covers purposes for which personal information may be collected.

26 A public body may collect personal information only if

- (d) with respect to personal information collected for a prescribed purpose,
- (i) the individual the information is about has consented in the prescribed manner to that collection, and
- (ii) a reasonable person would consider that collection appropriate in the circumstances,

In the case of these forms, we do not believe that it is appropriate to collect this type or amount of information for the hiring of civilians, especially volunteers who will not have access to sensitive information or systems.

As more than one police department appears to be undertaking this overcollection of personal information, we believe it is vital for your office to conduct an investigation to examine just how widespread this has become.

We appreciate that given the special powers and access to information provided to police officers, great care must be taken in avoiding hiring unsuitable individuals for these positions. However, many of the questions set out in the form we have obtained are so excessive even for these types of jobs that direction from your office is necessary.

As always, we would be pleased to assist if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely yours,

Vincent Gogolek
Executive Director
B.C. Freedom of Information
and Privacy Association (FIPA)

APPENDIX

Links to online forms

<http://www.cspolice.ca/Assets/CS+Police/Forms/Lifestyle+and+Integrity+Questionnaire.pdf?method=1>

<https://deltapolice.ca/documents/constable/integrity.pdf>

http://www2.gov.bc.ca/local/myhr/documents/jobs_hiring/corrections_lifestyle_questionnaire.pdf

<http://www.nwpolice.org/wp-content/uploads/NWPD-MEMBER-APPLICATION-PACKAGE-2012.pdf>

Links to departments making reference to these questionnaires:

<http://www.abbypd.ca/Police-Officer-Experienced-Applicants>

<https://www.vicpd.ca/careers/officers/experienced-officer>

<http://vancouver.ca/police/recruiting/police-officers/recruiting-process.html>