



Call for feedback on changes to our society

Summary:

As part of its routine consideration of Bylaws the Board of Directors (the “Board”) proposes to make certain changes to the B.C Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (“FIPA”) in order to remove the ‘Honorary Member’ category of membership. Honorary Members would be encouraged to stay involved with FIPA and may be honored in different ways.

The Board is seeking feedback from its existing Honorary Members and other Members regarding this change. As such, we invite you to submit comments or feedback in response to this proposed change prior to FIPA’s 2024 annual general meeting.

Background:

FIPA has had an ‘Honorary Member’ category of membership since its formation. This category grants individual membership status to individuals of special merit appointed by the Board of Directors who were not members of the FIPA at that time.

The Bylaw of FIPA (the “Bylaws”) define an “Honorary Member” as:

“an individual of special merit who is not a member of the Society [FIPA] may be recognized for their contribution to the purposes of the Society through the granting of an honorary membership by the Board. Such honorary member will have the same voting and other rights as an individual member.”

The category was intended to recognize people who made extraordinary contributions to FIPA and / or to the advancement of information and privacy rights who were not members of FIPA. In practical terms, Honorary Members have the same rights as Individual Members of FIPA, but they are not required to pay annual membership dues. Importantly, the Bylaws do not specify a

term for Honorary memberships and the Board of Directors has issued few Honorary memberships in recent years.

Rationale for Revision:

Informed, Ongoing Consent

For Individual and Organizational Members, membership in FIPA is generally renewed on an annual basis. When people or organizations join or renew their memberships, we can infer that they support the purpose and work of FIPA and wish to be formally involved. We can also infer that they understand the implications and rights of membership in FIPA and consent to being listed as a Member in our registry. A Member who no longer wishes to be a Member can simply opt not to renew their annual membership, or they can inform the Board that they are relinquishing their Membership.

On the other hand, Honorary Members are not required to affirm or renew their membership in FIPA on an annual basis (or at all). There is no mechanism in the Bylaws that requires a regular check-in to confirm ongoing consent to membership.

FIPA, as an organization, is an advocate for informed, ongoing consent as a principle that should govern the collection and use of personal information - and privacy law in general. We speak out against privacy policies that imply indefinite consent. The Board feels that our relationship to our Members, including Honorary Members, should also be informed by the principle of informed, ongoing consent.

Contact and Compliance with the Societies Act

As noted above, Honorary Members are not required to renew their memberships or update their contact information.

When an Individual or Organizational Member moves, changes their email, title, or other information, they have an opportunity to update the information on file with FIPA as part of their next annual Membership renewal. Honorary Members have no imperative to maintain their contact information with FIPA and, once lost, FIPA has a limited ability to regain such contact information. Over time this means the contact information of our numerous Honorary Members has degraded. Emails bounce, telephone numbers have changed, and postal addresses are no longer valid.

Under the *Societies Act* which governs FIPA, FIPA is required to keep a “register of members, organized by different classes of member if different classes exist, including contact information provided by each member”. We cannot claim to be able to fulfil this obligation with any degree of accuracy for most Honorary Members. Indeed, it is entirely possible that some persons listed as Honorary Members are now deceased, and certainly this will be the case in the future.

Participation in the Society

Members of FIPA are entitled and encouraged to participate in our annual general meetings, and we maintain a distribution list of contacts (including Members, Honorary Members and Donors) and use it to share information about FIPA’s activities, invite engagement and solicit input. Unfortunately, emails to some Honorary Members routinely bounce back as ‘undeliverable’. There also appear to be instances where Honorary memberships were awarded to an organization or corporate member rather than an individual.

Aspects Maintained or Redeveloped

The Bylaws will still allow for the Board to waive the annual membership fees for individuals ‘based on merit or need’, and this will allow us to continue to honour certain members based on merit and as consistent with our written policy.

This year, FIPA’s activities include implementing a Volunteer Management Program and building our Communities of Practice. Further, there is serious consideration of the development of an Honour Roll for significant contributions in the field. Such an Honour Roll could be established through a policy adopted by the Board and would allow FIPA to establish and maintain an ‘Honour Roll’ that recognizes distinguished contributions to the society and / or to the advancement of information and privacy rights generally.

In combination, these tools provide a more robust and specific manner to achieve the original goals of honorary memberships without the documented issues. All of these will afford opportunities for additional member engagement and participation.

Feedback and Procedures:

We would like to grow FIPA's active membership. We want to ensure that our members are actively interested in and supportive of the ongoing work of the Society and that we have the ability to contact them. For all of the above reasons, the Board is of the initial view that we should move away from open-ended Honorary Membership and remove the classification in the Bylaws.

The Board is seeking your feedback on the proposed change with respect to the removal of the "Honorary Members" category of membership as well as suggestions on other ways to honor individuals for their contributions to FIPA and/or to the advancement of information and privacy rights generally.

Please provide any responses or feedback to [secretary AT fipa.bc.ca](mailto:secretary@fipa.bc.ca) by May 2024. Feedback can be sent in the form of an email, word document or pdf. Please indicate your name, contact information and membership category.

RESOLVED as a special resolution that:

1. the current Bylaws of the Society be deleted in their entirety and that the form of Bylaws attached hereto as *Doc 07 2024 FIPA Bylaws* be adopted as the Bylaws of the Society in substitution for, and to the exclusion of, the existing Bylaws of the Society, with effect upon the filing through BC Societies; and
2. any authorized directors of the Society to sign all documents and take all actions that are necessary or desirable in carrying out the replacement of the Bylaws.