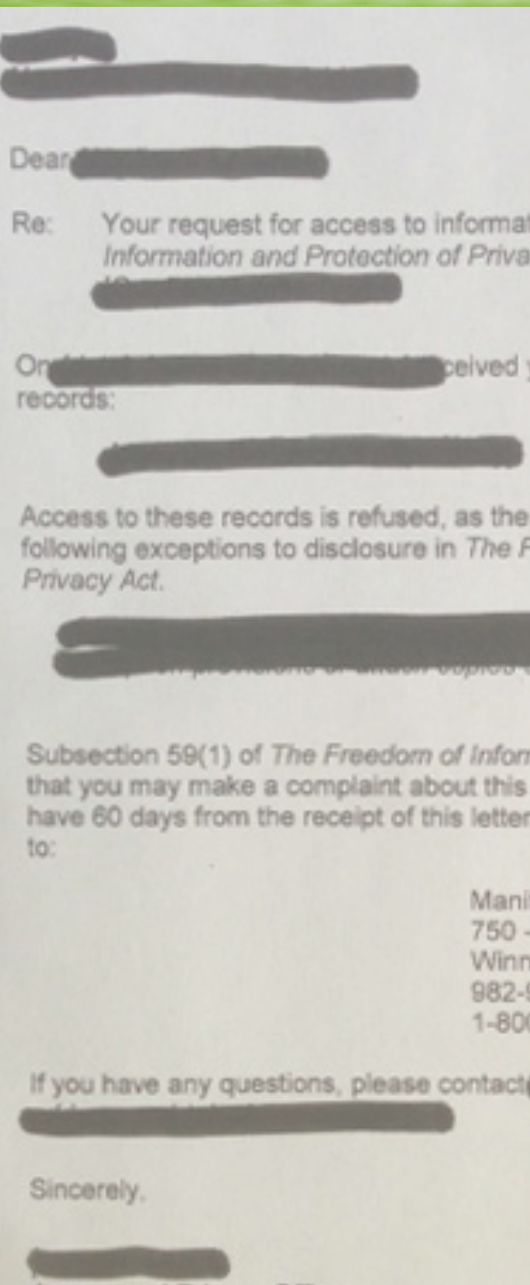


CASE STUDY

Access to Information in Practice

ACCESS TO INFORMATION



Katie was really happy with the job interview she had with a government department for a summer job that would give her some experience in her chosen field of study at university. When she found out that she didn't get the job, she was upset and disappointed. Her mom suggested that she follow up with the department to find out more about how she did in the job competition. Maybe she could learn something that would help with future job applications.

As allowed under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Katie made an application for records about the job competition. The department refused access (they denied her request) based on their belief that in giving Katie the requested records, they would be disclosing information about other job applicants, and that disclosing such information would be an unreasonable invasion of their privacy.

Katie made a complaint to the ombudsman because she didn't want information about others; she wanted information about how *she* did in the job competition. As part of the review, the ombudsman investigator looked at the records that were denied to Katie. Although the records contained personal information about Katie, they also contained information about other individuals. In discussions between the ombudsman and the department, it was decided that some of the records could be released if they were severed or redacted (some of the information about other individuals would be "blacked-out").

In the end, the department released severed versions of the interview guide that contained an interviewer's handwritten comments on Katie's answers to the interview questions, a chart of Katie's scores for each question, and a few other documents relevant to the request.

QUESTIONS:

1. Some people say "knowledge is power." How does that concept apply in Katie's situation?
2. Can you think of other situations where you might benefit from asking for government information? Think of at least three situations.