

# Huron



## MINUTE TAKING TIPS

*How to keep your minutes FIPPA friendly*



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## DID YOU KNOW MINUTES ARE CONSIDERED “RECORDS” UNDER FIPPA?

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act defines a ‘record’ for the purposes of the Act, as any record of information, no matter how made. This includes minutes.



The Act further provides that “every person has a right of access to a record or a part of a record in the custody or under the control of the institution” – in our case Huron University.

This means that minutes can be accessed by individuals through a “**request for access to information**”.

### **WHEN DRAFTING YOUR MINUTES, ALWAYS ASSUME THEY WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC!**

The Act also protects personal privacy and regulates access to and disclosure of personal information. Personal Information (PI) includes identifying details about an individual. PI also includes the personal opinions and views of an individual, as well as the views or opinions about an individual. With few exceptions, PI may only be disclosed with the consent of the individual to whom it relates.

Therefore, it is best to try to omit altogether any data that would constitute PI under FIPPA in order to avoid an invasion of personal privacy (also known as a privacy breach).

By keeping this in mind, and following the steps provided in this guide, you should have no trouble making sure your minutes stay ***FIPPA Friendly***.

*For the full section on what constitutes personal information under FIPPA please refer to the appendix at the end of this guide.*

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## WHY KEEP MINUTES?

Minutes are a vital aspect to the operations of the university and should contain enough information to:

- Ensure that open meetings are carried out in a transparent and accountable manner;
  - Maintain an accurate historical record of an officially convened meeting; and
  - Provide a reliable permanent record of the proceedings to those who were not in attendance, allowing for a clear understanding of the business that was conducted and why.
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## WHAT SHOULD BE IN YOUR MINUTES

As a minimum standard, your minutes should contain the following pieces of information:

- The nature of the meeting – regular or special (if special, state the purpose);
- The name of the body - associated office, department or organization holding the meeting;
- Date, time and location of the meeting;
- The list of those invited - attendees and regrets;
- Names of the meeting Chair and Secretary;
- Record of motion to call the meeting to order;
- A record of all motions that were presented and discussed;
- What was decided, what action will be taken and who will do it;
- Record of motion to adjourn;
- Date and place of the next meeting.

### WHAT TO LEAVE OUT...

- Exclude conversation, comments or discussions which are off topic;
- Avoid detailed chronicles of lengthy discussions that reach no conclusion;
- Do not use direct speech or direct quotes except as formal motions;
- Avoid emotional or intemperate language;
- Do not record each participant's contribution towards the discussion. The focus of the minutes should be on collective not personal action.

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## WAYS TO KEEP YOUR MINUTES FIPPA FRIENDLY

### MINUTES SHOULD ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING STANDARDS WHEN CREATED:

- ✓ Focus on documenting the processes and outcomes of the meeting, not transcribing verbatim what was said (unless it is a motion);
- ✓ Include only factual and concise statements about each issue discussed, omitting unnecessary details;
- ✓ Provide sufficient contextual information to enable the reconstruction of the actions that led to a decision;
- ✓ Do not include unsubstantiated or subjective information or opinions;
- ✓ Protect the privacy of individuals by avoiding the use of personal information without losing the meaning, importance and context of what was said.

It is possible for an individual to give their consent to have their opinions recorded, but even so, always endeavour to **avoid identifying attendees by name** (use the passive voice instead) and **always stick to the facts**. Focus on final outcome not step-by-step notation.

## To Be Clear

- ✓ Minutes should be a record of what was done in a meeting, and not a record of what was said by individuals.
- ✓ If the minutes are also to summarize the discussion, this should be in an objective manner that captures the key points made, without identifying those who made them.
- ✓ It is especially important to follow the rule against verbatim minutes when sensitive issues are discussed.

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Even if the severing of personal information is possible, it still makes the document look questionable in terms of transparency, as illustrated below:

### WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO:



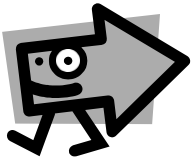
*Ms. Huron, a professor of Computer Science, thinks that budgetary surplus should be directed more towards computer advancement in order to keep up with the pace of today's technological evolution and that the university has selfishly ignored this aspect of advancement in favour of other initiatives.*

### BAD MINUTE-TAKING RESULTS IN MESSY SEVERING:



\_\_\_\_\_ budgetary surplus should be directed more towards computer advancement in order to keep up with the pace of today's technological evolution \_\_\_\_\_

**THIS DOES NOT REFLECT TRANSPARENCY**



### OPTIMAL FORMAT:

*It was suggested that budgetary surplus should be directed more towards computer advancement in order to keep up with technological evolution.*

The meaning and importance of the statement has not been lost, but the personal identifier and opinion are unnecessary to understanding the issue being discussed and should be omitted.

## BUT WHAT IF YOU **HAVE** TO INCLUDE PERSONAL INFORMATION?



Sometimes the subject matter of a meeting makes it necessary to record personal information as it is vital to the discussion. If you must include personal information, do so in a manner that makes it easily severable from the main body of minutes without resulting in “black out” sections as illustrated above.



At times it may be necessary to identify a speaker, but **use a business title** if this occurs; i.e. “the President” or “the Dean of ---” as opposed to an actual name.

**Proper organization of minutes into open and closed sections** is vital when creating good, comprehensive minutes. This makes it easier to provide access to public information as it is not mixed in with confidential information.

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## APPENDIX

“**personal information**” as per s. 2(1) of the *Act* means recorded information about an identifiable individual, including,

- i. information relating to the race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation or marital or family status of the individual,
- ii. information relating to the education or the medical, psychiatric, psychological, criminal or employment history of the individual or information relating to financial transactions in which the individual has been involved,
- iii. any identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to the individual,
- iv. the address, telephone number, fingerprints or blood type of the individual,
- v. the personal opinions or views of the individual except where they relate to another individual,
- vi. correspondence sent to an institution by the individual that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature, and replies to that correspondence that would reveal the contents of the original correspondence,
- vii. the views or opinions of another individual about the individual, and
- viii. the individual’s name where it appears with other personal information relating to the individual or where the disclosure of the name would reveal other personal information about the individual.