

factsheet



Authorization to Release Confidential Information

BC Assessment

This fact sheet explains the rules around the release of confidential information to property owners and property owner agents, and to let you know about some service improvements we have implemented.

What are we doing to improve efficiency?

We now process requests for confidential property information centrally, at our head office in Victoria. As a result, our area offices are no longer required to verify the information in the authorizations, which will lead to quicker response times.

What is Authorization of Agency?

Authorization of agency is the term that refers to the level of property information that an agent is authorized to receive, and the cost to receive that information. We consider two questions when determining authorization of agency:

1. Will the person be charged a fee for non-confidential property information? If the agent is acting on behalf of the owner, the agent has access to the information for free, just as the owner would. However, if the person is acting on behalf of a third party (e.g., tenants), then a fee will be charged.
2. Is the person entitled to receive confidential property information? This level of disclosure requires the agent to send us a completed *Authorization to Receive Confidential Property Information* form.

What property information is not confidential?

Non-confidential property information is available to the public and it includes these sources of information:

- “Face of the roll” information, including owner’s name, address, area number, school district, jurisdiction number, assessment roll number, class, actual value, description (i.e., land, exemptions,

building), assessed values, property identification, previous roll value, actual use code, neighbourhood code and dimensions.

- Information available to the public under the *Physical Inventory Disclosure Regulation*. This includes the area or dimensions and location of land, and the general description; total finished area, year built, effective year, number of stories, number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, basement (i.e., type: slab, crawl space or basement) of the building; and any outbuildings, including carport, garage, pool etc.
- Derived information, which is acquired data that we analyze to develop a series of market inputs for valuation of a range of properties.
- Physical property information that is made available for sale by BC Assessment, such as requests from third parties wanting information about properties (except during the set times for property appeals).

What property information is confidential?

Confidential property information includes:

- actual financial performance of a property;
- information provided by property owners such as actual rents, vacancies, rent rolls etc.; and
- third party information that has been used to assist with the assessment of a property and the release of which would concern the third party.

An agent can be appointed by an owner to act on an assessment appeal without having to complete the *Authorization to Receive Confidential Property Information* form, provided no confidential information is required to conduct that appeal.

Are there different rules for residential versus commercial properties?

Yes. The *Authorization to Receive Confidential Property Information* form does not have to be

completed by agents who are acting on behalf of owners of residential properties that accommodate up to three families. In such cases, the owner simply has to appoint their agent in writing. In the case of any other type of property (e.g., commercial, industrial, farm or multi-family residential) the prescribed form must be completed and returned to us before confidential information can be released to anyone other than the owner.

Property Value Summaries (PVSs), which contain information derived by BC Assessment, are not considered to be confidential. However, a fee is charged for release of the PVS to anyone other than the owner of the property, or an agent of that owner.

What are the rules for IC&I properties?

For IC&I assessment appeals, you can select up to six PVSs of comparable properties free of charge. In cases where the appeal is a third party appeal, the fee is \$100 per property.

What are the rules for residential properties?

We do not charge a fee if the request is for a single family residence by the property's current owner, a lawyer stating he/she is acting on behalf of the owner, or anyone with written authority from the owner to act as an agent. Otherwise, we charge \$16 per residential PVS. However, during the enquiry period, from January 1 to 31, up to four comparables are provided free upon request to each residential property owner on title.

If a property owner appeals their assessment to the Property Assessment Review Panel (PARP), we will provide another four free comparables per owner on the title. If the property owner appeals to the Property Assessment Appeal Board (PAAB), we will provide another four free comparables per owner on the title. This means that each residential property owner on the title that appeals their assessment could potentially receive 12 free comparables. We believe that our policy balances the legislated needs of property owners with the business requirements of tax agents.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

If you have questions about the processing of confidential property information requests, contact us at ckt@bcassessment.ca or at 250-595-6211 ext 304.