

Protecting your personal information

Protecting your Social Insurance numbers (SIN) as it is a confidential number that is restricted to income reporting purposes. It is a key piece of information about an individual that, if it falls into the wrong hands, can lead to fraud and identity theft. The SIN should not be used as a general identifier as it can be used to apply for a credit card or open a bank account, rent vehicles, equipment or accommodation in your name, leaving you responsible for the bills, charges, bad cheques and taxes. Only provide your SIN when legally required.

While this is not a recommended practice, there is no law preventing private-sector organizations from asking for the SIN for other purposes such as identification.

In these cases, you are under no obligation to provide your SIN.

Service Canada has identified the following examples of when you do not need to provide your SIN:

- Proving your identity (except for specific government programs)
- Completing a job application before you get the job
- Completing an application to rent a property
- Negotiating a lease with a landlord
- Completing credit card application
- Cashing a cheque
- Completing some banking transactions (mortgage, line of credit, loan)
- Completing a medical questionnaire
- Renting a car
- Subscribing to long-distance or cellular telephone services
- Writing a will
- Applying to a university or college.

Sample Letter/Email

If you decide to put your concerns in writing, the following template provides a suggested starting point for drafting a letter or email outlining your privacy concerns. For Tips, see the [Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada](#). When a privacy issue arises, your first step should generally be to try to resolve the issue directly with the organization. Organizations should take your concerns seriously and work with you to resolve them. Below is a sample letter on how to raise your privacy concern with a business.

Be sure to include enough information for the organization to identify you in its records (e.g. full name, account numbers, address) and to contact you; and a reference number (if you have had previous contact with the organization on the matter).

Dear Sir/Madam (or name of person you have been in contact with previously),

I am writing to you regarding a privacy concern.

[Provide details about your concern and the specific issue. Briefly explain what occurred and, if applicable, what impact it has had on you.]

My hope is that you will be able address this/these issue(s) and alleviate my concern(s).

[If appropriate, state the specific action you would like the organization to take.]

I would appreciate a response within 30 business days. If you cannot provide a response within that time, please let me know when you will be able to respond.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [your daytime phone number and/or your email address] if you would like additional details or to discuss the matter further.