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## **COMMISSIONER TO PUBLICLY GRADE MINISTRIES' FOI COMPLIANCE**

**Victoria**—Information and Privacy Commissioner David Loukidelis today announced that, starting with a pilot project later this year, he will begin issuing regular public report cards assessing the performance of government ministries in complying with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (“FIPPA”).

In his annual report released today, the Commissioner raised concerns about the ongoing struggles of many government ministries to respond to access requests in a timely fashion, as FIPPA requires. “I have decided that other steps are necessary to bring pressure to bear,” the Commissioner said. “Beginning with a pilot later this year, we will start a program of report cards grading each ministry on their compliance with the law. The main focus is timeliness—access delayed is access denied and timely access is critically important for the public’s right to know what government is doing.”

Loukidelis also reported that privacy breaches are on the rise in British Columbia. “We investigated 92 privacy breaches last year” he said, adding, “Businesses and governments need to do a better job of protecting peoples’ personal information. They should review their practices and constantly update them as risks change.”

Another important report theme is the apparent lack of awareness of many public bodies and organizations of their information security weaknesses. “This is bad for privacy,” the Commissioner said. “Organizations and public bodies need to inventory their personal information holdings and regularly assess and where necessary upgrade their security arrangements. If personal information isn’t properly protected, it’ll go walkabout and that’s not good.”

Loukidelis also called on the provincial government to ensure that patient privacy is fully protected in the electronic health record system it’s now building. The system will integrate patient health records and allow immediate access to those records by a wide range of authorized users. “The government has passed legislation requiring patients to be given a meaningful degree of control over who can access their medical information” the Commissioner said. “Now the government has to follow through on this promise and build a system that offers patients meaningful control over who gets to see their health information and why.”

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