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INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER NOTES SPIKE IN PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION

VICTORIA - British Columbians are becoming increasingly concerned about the protection of their personal information, Information and Privacy Commissioner David Loukidelis noted today in his 2005-06 annual report to the Legislature.

“A 13 per cent spike in private sector privacy files reflects a growing interest in private sector privacy practices,” the Commissioner stated. “Public concerns can range from retailers’ demands for customer personal information on the return of a product – the subject of one of my orders last year – to fears about the impacts of new technologies such as radio frequency identification devices. That’s why we’re stepping up our guidance on legal privacy requirements on everything from the use of RFIDs to the collection of personal information during hiring.”

The Commissioner’s staff of 17 closed a record 5,504 matters last year, including several high-profile privacy breach investigations – the result of leaks or thefts of sensitive personal information from public bodies and private organizations. The annual report includes a series of recommended steps for guarding against privacy breaches and responding effectively after they happen.

The Commissioner noted that, in addition to providing practical advice to organizations on compliance with B.C. freedom of information and protection of privacy laws, his staff successfully mediates several hundred disputes each year. Thirty-four mediation summaries are included in the 2005-06 annual report.

This is the first year that the Commissioner has released the annual report only in electronic format – on CD and at www.oipc.bc.ca under “What’s New” – generating a considerable savings compared to the cost of printed reports.

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