

For immediate release

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BC Information and Privacy Commissioner Michael Harvey highlights importance of privacy rights to innovation during Privacy Awareness Week

VICTORIA— Michael Harvey, Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia, issued the following statement to mark Privacy Awareness Week, May 5-9, 2025. Privacy Awareness Week is a global effort held in May, coordinated by members of the [Asia Pacific Privacy Authorities](#) (APPA), to promote awareness of privacy issues and the importance of the protection of personal information.

“This year’s Privacy Awareness Week (PAW) theme, ‘Privacy is everyone’s business,’ comes at a critical time, as global political events make ever more urgent the importance of innovation to drive economic growth, investment attraction and efficient and effective delivery of public services.

“In today’s digitized society and economy, innovation in the public and private sector largely relies on the use of personal information. It will only be successful if the people of British Columbia have trust in how their personal information is used. This trust must be built on a strong foundation of privacy protections, based on recognizing privacy as a right.

“This week, we highlight the responsibility of all organizations – public and private – to prioritize our privacy rights when developing new technologies that innovate in the ways they use personal information.

“For private and public organizations: privacy can and should be ‘built-in’ during the design process, not an after-thought. When launching new products and services, where consent is required by law, organizations should ask for it in ways that are clear, concise and meaningful, so individuals can make truly informed decisions. Where the requirement is instead notification, that should similarly be obvious and easy to understand.

“We encourage government to advance long-needed private sector privacy reform onto the legislative agenda as a driver of innovation: The privacy principles in BC’s *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) are strong, but the Act was tabled 20+ years ago, back when social media didn’t exist, let alone artificial intelligence. Here in BC, we need a modern model to address modern Canadian challenges and help promote BC innovation, privacy protection, and trust.

“And for citizens: we encourage you to reflect on how your personal information is important to you, know the rights that you have under the law, and demand better of the organizations that you deal with.

“In our Information Society, our personal information is our essence and the core of our unique identity. It is who we are as individuals. When we have control over our own personal information, we are free, autonomous and dignified individuals who also collectively govern each other. Understood in this way, privacy is a fundamental right – a human right,” said Commissioner Harvey.

“Now more than ever, innovation is the imperative in every aspect of life in British Columbia, and because this innovation will be built on our personal information, it must be built on a foundation of trust – and that means treating privacy as a right.”

Interested in having your say about the strategic direction of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner? BC Information and Privacy Commissioner Michael Harvey will visit seven cities throughout British Columbia in May to gather public feedback as part of the office’s strategic planning process. Click [here](#) for more information.

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