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News Release

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Commissioner makes recommendations to enhance transparency and accountability in B.C. open government initiative

VICTORIA — In an investigation report released today, Information and Privacy Commissioner Elizabeth Denham has made 18 recommendations to promote transparency and accountability in the B.C. government's open government initiative.

"The principles of transparency and accountability must be at the heart of open government. Citizens should be able to access information about government's actions and decisions in order to hold government to account and engage in informed debate. My report assesses how and whether the open government initiative achieves these aims," said Denham.

The Commissioner examined the three core elements of the B.C. open government program: open information (the proactive disclosure of records), open data (making raw data available and accessible to the public), and a disclosure log (the public release of government's replies to general access to information requests).

"When it comes to open data, B.C. is on the leading edge. Yet other key elements of open government – such as the Open Information website and disclosure of past responses to general access to information requests – need more work in order to better promote transparency and accountability. My recommendations will help government strengthen all three areas of open government, including how the initiative can be sustained over the long term," said Denham.

With respect to open information, the only records government is currently proactively disclosing on its website are travel expenses of ministers and deputy ministers. The Commissioner recommends government expand the type of records proactively disclosed to include hospitality expenses, calendar information, contracts over \$10,000, and audit reports. Government should also review the list of other categories of records that must be disclosed under FIPPA to consider what other information it should be disclosing on a proactive basis.

With respect to the disclosure log, government has implemented most of the best practices set out in a previous investigation report issued by the Commissioner. However, government exempts some responses from publication and, in response to a complaint from the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association, the

Commissioner reviewed those exemptions and recommended that government institute a secondary severing process so that more records are published to the disclosure log.

With respect to open data, the Commissioner recommends that government commit to sign and implement the G8 Open Data Charter, work toward releasing high value data sets, and develop a code of practice to ensure protection of privacy in open data.

Investigation Report F13-03: Evaluating the Government of British Columbia's Open Government Initiative, is available at: www.oipc.bc.ca

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