



OFFICE OF THE  
INFORMATION &  
PRIVACY COMMISSIONER  
for British Columbia

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**News Release**

**For Immediate Release  
October 24, 2017**

### **Global privacy sweep finds website privacy notices lacking**

**VICTORIA**—Results of the fifth annual Global Privacy Enforcement Network (GPEN) privacy sweep show that website notices are too vague and generally inadequate.

“I am pleased to join my colleagues around the world in this important initiative. The annual privacy sweeps provide an opportunity to collaborate with regulators across the globe while educating the public about important privacy issues,” said Acting BC Privacy Commissioner Drew McArthur.

Twenty four privacy regulators took part in the global sweep from May 22-26, 2017. Regulators examined the privacy notices, communications and practices of 455 websites and apps to consider whether it was clear from a user’s perspective exactly what information was collected, for what purpose, and how it would be processed, used and shared.

Overall, regulators found that despite clearly explaining what information would be collected, privacy communications lacked specific detail, failed to inform the user what would happen to their information once it had been provided, and failed to specify with whom data would be shared.

For its part in the sweep, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for BC (OIPC) examined privacy materials of five polling firms in BC, which have the potential to collect a large amount of personal information online.

Though each of the firms had a privacy policy, none cited the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) as the applicable privacy law. Some of the firms instead cited federal law, the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*, which does not apply to most BC organizations.

“These polling firms recognize the importance of privacy protection, but do not appear to be aware of their specific obligations under PIPA. PIPA applies to over 380,000 organizations in BC. The law sets out specific responsibilities for organizations to follow, and includes important privacy and access rights for British Columbians. I will be reaching out to umbrella business associations and non-profits to inform organizations about BC’s privacy laws.”

The OIPC contacted the polling firms and recommended changes to their privacy policies to ensure compliance with PIPA.

Founded in 2010, GPEN is an informal network of privacy enforcement authorities from around the world. The members aim to work together to strengthen personal privacy protections in a global context. The network is comprised of 57 privacy enforcement authorities in 43 jurisdictions.

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