



OFFICE OF THE
INFORMATION &
PRIVACY COMMISSIONER
for British Columbia

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News Release

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BC landlords collect too much personal information on application forms

VICTORIA—Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner Drew McArthur has found that landlords in BC generally collect too much personal information from prospective tenants. The findings were published today in *Investigation Report P18-01: Always, sometimes, or never? Personal information and tenant screening*.

The investigation examined the personal information collected by 13 landlords from prospective tenants during the tenancy application process. Landlords and not-for-profit organizations in BC are subject to the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA), which regulates how organizations collect, use, and disclose personal information.

“Rentals make up 30% of housing in BC. Near zero vacancy rates across the province have created a competitive market where landlords can ask prospective tenants for sensitive personal information as justification for seeking the ‘best’ tenant. Unfortunately, many applicants feel they have no choice but to provide this information to avoid missing out on a place to live,” said Acting Commissioner McArthur.

PIPA recognizes the legitimate need for organizations to collect, use, and disclose personal information, and the right of individuals to protect it. But PIPA limits the personal information that may be collected, used, or disclosed to only what is reasonable to achieve the purpose.

“Low vacancy rates may prompt landlords to believe they can collect whatever information they want from prospective tenants. In some cases, landlords required applicants to provide months’ worth of detailed bank statements, or for consent to conduct a credit check, or for information protected by the *Human Rights Code*, such as marital status. In most instances, requiring this type of information would violate BC privacy laws.”

The report details when personal information is *always*, *sometimes*, or *never* authorized by PIPA.

The Acting Commissioner’s recommendations include that landlords:

- Limit the amount of required personal information on tenant application forms;
- Clearly state the specific purpose for the collection of personal information from prospective tenants;

- Only require a credit check when a prospective tenant cannot provide sufficient references about previous tenancies or satisfactory employment and income verification; and
- Never collect information from social media platforms or internet search engines.

The OIPC has released a guidance document to assist landlords in determining what personal information they can collect, available on the [OIPC website](#).

Investigation Report P18-01 Always, sometimes, or never? Personal information and tenant screening is available for download at <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/reports/investigation-reports/>

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