



Protecting privacy. Promoting transparency.

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**For Immediate Release**  
Jan. 27, 2012

**B.C. Privacy Commissioner launches video surveillance education project**

**VICTORIA** — British Columbia's Information and Privacy Commissioner has launched a public education initiative about video surveillance in the private sector.

"January 28 is Data Privacy Day, an international celebration to show that privacy matters in today's digital world," said Commissioner Elizabeth Denham. "To mark the occasion, we are educating British Columbians about a simple and widely used technology with significant implications for privacy."

The use of video surveillance by the private sector has exploded in recent years. Widely believed to be a security and crime prevention tool, advances in the technology provide opportunities for businesses to monitor consumer behaviour and identify people through facial recognition software.

"We're focusing on the private sector – and the retail sector in particular – because we believe many such businesses are unaware of the obligations created by their use of video surveillance, including their obligation to notify customers about surveillance and its purpose, and to minimize the impact on personal privacy.

"Just because the technology is available doesn't mean it's right for every business. Under the *Personal Information Protection Act*, companies must have a defined problem that the surveillance is designed to address, and customers must be notified *before* they are captured on camera," said Denham.

The first step of the OIPC's education initiative is a survey of B.C.-based retailers to uncover how many companies are aware of their obligations to protect personal information under provincial law. The survey results will inform future education, outreach and enforcement work in the sector.

"There is no question that technology has changed the face of our world. But it has not displaced the value of privacy. Citizens expect their personal information to be protected and their privacy rights respected. I will continue to raise public awareness about the right to privacy in the digital age, and provide organizations with practical tools to fulfill their obligation to protect privacy," said Denham.

For more information about Data Privacy Day, visit: [www.staysafeonline.org/dpd](http://www.staysafeonline.org/dpd)

-30-

Media Contact:

Cara McGregor  
Manager, Communications and Public Education  
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner  
250 217-5535

*The following is an excerpt from the 2008 publication, "Guidelines for Overt Video Surveillance in the Private Sector," authored jointly by the B.C. Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Alberta Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. Available at: [www.oipc.bc.ca](http://www.oipc.bc.ca)*

### **10 things to do when considering, planning and using video surveillance**

1. Determine whether a less privacy-invasive alternative to video surveillance would meet your needs.
2. Establish the business reason for conducting video surveillance and use video surveillance only for that reason.
3. Develop a policy on the use of video surveillance.
4. Limit the use and viewing range of cameras as much as possible.
5. Inform the public that video surveillance is taking place.
6. Store any recorded images in a secure location, with limited access, and destroy them when they are no longer required for business purposes.
7. Be ready to answer questions from the public. Individuals have the right to know who is watching them and why, what information is being captured, and what is being done with recorded images.
8. Give individuals access to information about themselves. This includes video images.
9. Educate camera operators on the obligation to protect the privacy of individuals.
10. Periodically evaluate the need for video surveillance.

Media Contact:

Cara McGregor  
Manager, Communications and Public Education  
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner  
250 217-5535