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Report finds that private liquor and cannabis retailers must do more to comply with BC privacy legislation

VICTORIA— A report released today found that few private liquor and cannabis retailers maintain adequate privacy management programs or document privacy policies, despite obligations under BC’s private sector *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA).

The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for BC (OIPC) conducted a compliance review of 30 private sector licensed liquor and cannabis retailers based on media stories and enquiries about the sector’s collection, use, and disclosure of personal information. Cannabis retailers in particular are required to use security cameras to monitor all retail and product storage areas, entrances, and exits, adding an additional collection of sensitive personal information.

“Surprisingly, many retailers didn’t understand that they collect personal information, despite the fact that all private licensed liquor and cannabis retailers collect some form of personal information from employees and customers who enter physical stores or make purchases online,” said Commissioner Michael McEvoy.

“In addition to finding that most retailers need to do more to comply with BC’s privacy laws, we also found that a small number of retailers collect biometric information from staff, customers, or both. Thumbprint scanners to document staff signing in and out for the day and the use of facial recognition software as part of a surveillance system are just a few examples of this. Unless there are exceptional circumstances to consider, BC cannabis and liquor stores are not authorized to use facial recognition technology, and I have signaled that this practice should stop immediately.”

The report contains 18 recommendations for liquor and cannabis retailers to establish and maintain privacy management programs, including:

- Designating someone to be responsible for ensuring the organization complies with PIPA;
- Developing written policies; and
- Monitoring compliance and conducting risk assessments to know that security safeguards are effective.

The full report is available here: <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/reports/audit-compliance/>

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