

January 29, 2024

Commissioner statement on Data Privacy Day and the 20th Anniversary of the Personal Information Protection Act

VICTORIA – BC Information and Privacy Commissioner Michael McEvoy released the following statement in recognition of Data Privacy Day, January 28, 2023 and the 20th Anniversary of the enactment of the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) in January 2004:

“Data Privacy Day comes as we mark 20 years since the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) went into force. The commemoration of these two events offer an opportunity to reflect on the past two decades of our private sector privacy law – both the tremendous strides we’ve made in protecting people’s personal information, and just how much work remains ahead.

“PIPA’s enactment marked a pivotal change in the relationship between organizations and the people they serve. PIPA provides a foundation for trust when British Columbians provide their personal information in countless everyday transactions – making a purchase online, posting on social media, or providing potential sensitive information to a medical clinic or non-profit, for example. That foundation is based on internationally accepted privacy principles, such as consent and limiting the collection of information to a specific, clearly defined, and reasonable purpose.

“Those fundamentals remain strong; however, PIPA now requires a significant upgrade so that it remains fit for purpose. My office has been at the forefront of responding to the complex threats to privacy that have emerged in the digital age – conducting investigations into social media companies, facial recognition technologies, and, more recently, artificial intelligence. We are proud to stand up for British Columbians’ privacy rights in these spaces; however, we need the right tools to do that work effectively in the future.

“PIPA is nearly alone among private sector laws in North America in lacking mandatory breach notification – an obligation for organizations to inform our office and individuals affected of privacy breaches that could cause serious harm, so that we can work with them to mitigate those risks. Among other things, the legislation should also provide for administrative monetary penalties that ensure a financial deterrent for bad actors flagrantly disregarding someone’s privacy rights.

“Data Privacy Day reminds us that there are ever-evolving and growing threats to our personal information in the digital age, of the need to be cautious when sharing information online, and it reminds organizations of their obligation to protect that information. Underpinning these efforts must be a law that works for British Columbians facing modern threats to their personal information. Government needs to modernize our legislation so that British Columbians are properly protected for the next 20 years and beyond.”

OIPC Data Privacy Day webinar – Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA): essentials for your organization

The OIPC is hosting a webinar on PIPA essentials on January 30 from 10am-11:30am Pacific Time. For more information and to register, visit: <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/news-events/events/>

Commissioner on 20 years of PIPA

Commissioner McEvoy discusses the 20th Anniversary of PIPA, what it has meant to British Columbians and the need for reforms to the legislation: <https://youtu.be/D9JVLG-kJbI>

Resources:

- [PrivacyRight: Step-by-step guidance on how to build a robust privacy management program from the ground up](#)
- [Getting accountability right with a privacy management program:](#)
- [Securing personal information: a self-assessment tool for public bodies and organizations](#)
- [Guide for organizations collecting personal information online](#)
- [Privacy guidelines for strata corporations and strata agents](#)
- [Privacy tips for seniors: Protect your personal information](#)

Media Contact

Noel Boivin | Senior Communications Officer
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for BC
236-638-2230 | nboivin@oipc.bc.ca
X: @BCInfoPrivacy