

For immediate release

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Annual Report and Service Plan 2025/2026: Commissioner calls for reform to modernize laws to build trust amid unprecedented demand for OIPC services

VICTORIA – In his office’s latest Annual Report and Service Plan, BC Information and Privacy Commissioner Michael Harvey called for reforms to modernize BC’s privacy and access to information laws to better protect people’s rights and earn their trust in the Information Age.

The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia’s Annual Report and Service Plan 2025/26, tabled this morning in the BC Legislature, details the office’s work from April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026.

The report details an unprecedented surge in the number of files coming before the OIPC, including the number of people filing privacy complaints and requesting reviews of access to information decisions.

Among the increases over the previous reporting period were:

- **Privacy complaints nearly doubled:** The number of privacy complaints received by the office across both the public sector *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the private sector *Personal Information Protection Act* increased by nearly 100% from 456 to 904.
- **Access complaints up 75%:** Access complaints, made when there are concerns about how a public body or organization processed an access request, went up from 448 to 784.
- **Requests for review up 47%:** Files where access to information applicants challenged public bodies’ access to information decisions – including denial of access, or severing – increased from 755 to 1,110.
- **Deemed refusals up 56%:** Cases where applicants alleged public bodies failed to respond to access requests within legislated timelines increased from 348 to 543.

“This year’s Annual Report makes an urgent case for legislative reform. It tells a story of technology and trust: an untenable disparity between the potential of modern technologies to harvest and exploit people’s personal information, and the strength of protections for people’s rights embedded in laws designed for another era. If we don’t address that gap with legislative change now, trust between people and the organizations and institutions that serve them will continue to erode,” he said.

Commissioner Harvey noted that the increased use of artificial intelligence tools, such as large language models, is both impacting people’s rights and also what they do when they believe those rights are violated.

“We’ve determined that the significant increase in files coming before our office is fuelled in part by the use of AI tools. These tools have the potential to make services by offices such as ours more accessible; however, they add a layer of complexity due to both the volume of submissions, and AI-generated

hallucinations and errors, which require careful review. We will continue to review our own processes, and work with the public, public bodies, and organizations to make sure that we are able to effectively enforce our mandate to protect the privacy and access rights of people in this province.”

Strategic plan priorities in focus

This Annual Report is the first published since the release of the OIPC’s Strategic Plan 2025-2028: Trust in the Age of Information, in October 2025, and reflects the three priorities of the report: trust and transparency; trusted innovation; and rights equity. The report reflects the OIPC’s efforts to advance these priorities. The Service Plan, included with the report, details the OIPC’s progress towards each of the goals driving these priorities.

The Annual Report highlights the office’s audit into the University of British Columbia’s freedom of information processes, which found that UBC took on average 100 days to respond to FOI requests, the lowest rate of compliance in 10 years of OIPC audits. The university committed to positive changes and the Commissioner called on all public bodies to review the report’s recommendations and reflect on their own processes to build a culture of transparency.

Three reports released during this period delved into critical areas where trust and technology intersect in the Information Age:

- children’s privacy and safety online in the OIPC’s joint investigation into TikTok with federal and provincial commissioners;
- rising levels of surveillance in the investigation into the city of Richmond’s use of cameras at intersections; and
- the protection of health information, especially in times of crisis, in the investigation into snooping following the tragedy at the Lapu Lapu Day festival in Vancouver.

“These are modern challenges that require modernized laws with effective tools to deal with them. We can no longer rely on legislation written for another era. The number of files coming into our office and the increasing complexity and scope of the issues before our office are testament to that.”

Full report: <http://oipc.bc.ca/documents/budget-annual-report-service-plans/3188>

Video overview: <https://youtu.be/OmswONvnBRo>

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