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**June 16, 2014**

**Commissioner Denham welcomes the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R v Spencer***

**VICTORIA**—B.C.'s Information and Privacy Commissioner Elizabeth Denham issued the following statement regarding the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R. v. Spencer*.

"The Supreme Court of Canada's unanimous ruling in *R v. Spencer* is a landmark. It affirms the right of individuals to be anonymous online. And it makes sure the courts, not just law enforcement, decide when online privacy gives way.

"The decision has important implications for Bill C-13, the "*Cyberbullying Act*" and Bill S-4, the *Digital Privacy Act*, both of which are before Parliament. If passed, Bill C-13 would grant immunity to organizations that voluntarily disclose the personal information of Canadians to a range of authorities. I support my colleague, Daniel Therrien, Privacy Commissioner of Canada, in encouraging parliamentarians to carefully consider the consequences of the Court's decision in their deliberations on Bill C-13 as well as Bill S-4.

"The *Spencer* ruling also has clear implications for British Columbia's privacy law, the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA). It currently allows businesses to share personal information with law enforcement agencies and others without a warrant, which is deeply troubling. I'm concerned that PIPA lacks adequate rules on what information can or should be provided without a warrant. There's also no way of knowing how often this is happening, how much information is disclosed or why. The *Spencer* decision shows that we need better rules in BC, and we also need transparency and accountability measures to be put into BC's privacy law."

"PIPA is currently being reviewed by an all-party Special Committee of the Legislature. I have recommended that the Committee narrow these PIPA provisions to prevent warrantless disclosure of personal information. My recommendations are in line with the Court's reasons in *Spencer* and would ensure that British Columbians' privacy rights would not give way to warrantless access by law enforcement."