

June 12, 2014

The Globe and Mail

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

As the Information and Privacy Commissioners for Alberta and British Columbia, we are concerned that Ms. Wood's story may encourage organizations to implement social media background checks without fully understanding the privacy and legal implications of doing so ("Nine tips for using social media to make the right hire" Jun 9).

There are real and significant privacy risks when an employer collects personal information about a candidate through Facebook, Twitter or other social media. Political views, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and information about third parties could all be gleaned from public posts. Such information goes beyond what is reasonable for vetting employees.

Our offices have published guidelines to help organizations navigate social media background checks and privacy laws. The Alberta and BC guidelines offer advice to organizations on how much information can or should be collected through social media while performing background checks.

Candidates applying for work in the digital age haven't dispensed with their right to privacy. Employers need to understand privacy laws and act accordingly.

Sincerely,

Jill Clayton



Information and Privacy Commissioner of
Alberta

Elizabeth Denham



Information and Privacy Commissioner for
British Columbia