Trust, transparency, and technology:
Access to information in BC

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OFFICE OF THE INFORMATION & PRIVACY COMMISSIONER FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

Fireside chat

Michael Harvey/*Information & Privacy Commissioner for BC*

Michael was appointed to a six-year term as BC's Information and Privacy Commissioner by unanimous motion of the Legislative Assembly in May 2024.

From 2019 until his appointment, Michael served as the Information and Privacy Commissioner for Newfoundland and Labrador. Prior to taking on that role, he led policy and planning initiatives in executive positions in Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Health and Cabinet Secretariat.

He holds degrees in Political Science from Memorial University and Queen's University and certificates in conflict management, change management and diversity, equity and inclusion. He has lectured on political science and public administration at Memorial University, the University of Guelph, and the University of Toronto.

John Tuck/*Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Legal Services Branch, BC Ministry of Attorney General*

John Tuck, KC (1995) is the Assistant Deputy Attorney General in the Legal Services Branch at B.C.'s Ministry of Attorney General. With nearly 31 years of experience, including specializing in information and privacy law, he provides strategic legal advice to government. He has appeared at all levels of court, including in front of the Supreme Court of Canada. In addition to his legal practice, he has been an adjunct professor at the University of Victoria law school, where he has taught access to information privacy law.

Morning snack provided by:

FIPA Your Data Your Rights

Afternoon snack provided by:

PrivacyWorks.

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Access, AI and accountability

Applicants and public bodies alike bear responsibility and accountability for how they participate in the access to information system under FIPPA, and interact with one another. The rapid emergence of generative AI and agentic AI as tools that are now broadly available is presenting both opportunities and challenges. This panel will explore the role of AI in access from all sides. What amounts to responsible use of AI and AI agents by an applicant? How should public bodies respond to AI-generated requests and submissions? How can public bodies use technology, including AI, to facilitate and expedite the access process? What are a public body's legal and ethical obligations in terms of providing access to AI-generated information?

Alexis Kerr/*Partner, Norton Rose Fulbright*
Alexis has spent the past 25 years practicing in the areas of access to information and privacy law, both broadly and with a specific focus on the health sector. Her experience spans both private practice, where she advises public and private sector clients alike on their access and privacy compliance obligations and best practices, and having worked in-house as General Counsel to one of British Columbia's largest health authorities. In the latter capacity, she was responsible for the operations of the health authority's FOI and privacy offices, though which she gained a deep knowledge of the intersection, and tension, between compliance objectives and operational realities. Alexis has assisted clients with access and privacy proceedings before a variety of Canadian regulators and the courts. She is also a past chair of both the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) – BC Branch Freedom of Information and Privacy Section and the CBA National Privacy and Access Law Section, and is a Certified Information Privacy Professional/Canada. She has participated in drafting numerous law reform submissions to government concerning access and privacy legislation, and has appeared as a witness before parliamentary and Senate committees to speak to access and privacy issues.

George Emery/*CEO, Vivacity Technologies*
George Emery is the Founder and CEO of Vivacity Technologies, a British Columbia firm modernizing how public-sector organizations manage requests and critical data. With a background spanning technology, finance, and business operations, George leads the deployment of VivaCitadel, an advanced Freedom of Information (FOI) solution that harnesses AI technology to automate record redaction and deduplication, cutting administrative friction and boosting public transparency. In addition to driving tech innovation at Vivacity, George shares his hands-on industry expertise as a sessional instructor at Thompson Rivers University. He holds a BSc in Computing and Economics as well as an MBA.

Michelle Schop/*Data Operations Analyst,PrivacyWorks*
Michelle has built her career handling sensitive data across fields such as intellectual property, federal prosecution, and most recently access to information as a Data Operations Analyst at PrivacyWorks Consulting. Having processed multiple terabytes of records, she brings a frontline perspective on how AI is reshaping access, and the infrastructure that supports it, for applicants and public bodies across Canada.

Kyle Friesen/*Director of Legal Services and General Counsel, Surrey Police Service*
R. Kyle Friesen, O.O.M. is the Director of Legal Services and General Counsel for Surrey Police Service, following 22+ years as Legal Advisor to the RCMP in British Columbia. Since 1998, he has provided "live" legal advice on all operational and administrative policing matters. He was Legal Counsel to the Integrated Security Unit for the 2010 Winter Olympics. He has appeared in all Courts in BC and in the Yukon Court of Appeal, and national and provincial administrative tribunals. From 1994-1998, Mr. Friesen was with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of BC, dealing with police departments and law enforcement issues. From 1986-1994, he served in the policing and national security sector in Ottawa.

Mr. Friesen holds a B.A. (Honours) (1981), an LL.B. (1984), and an M.A. (2002). He was called to the Bar of BC in 1985 and is a member of the Law Society of BC and the Canadian Bar Association (BC and National Section Executive member). He is the Chair of the CBA Freedom of Information and Privacy Section (BC) for 2026-2027. In 2012, he became a Master Access and Privacy Professional (MAPP), awarded by the Privacy and Access Council of Canada. In 2023, he was appointed to the Order of Merit of the Police Forces at the Officer level (O.O.M.). He is a frequent conference and training presenter on legal, security and privacy issues relating to operational law enforcement.

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Reflecting on reconciliation: where we are, where we're going

Have you had the opportunity to explore reconciliation in the access to information context? This panel will review some of the ways that reconciliation is being – and could be – accounted for in the administration of access to information in British Columbia. We will explore the FOI applicant experience, data sovereignty and information sharing, cases that engage reconciliation, and how BC's Modern Treaty landscape may shape the dialogue in BC.

oline Twiss/*Deputy Commissioner, OIPC BC*
oline Twiss provides strategic leadership and advises on matters of law, policy, and organizational governance as Deputy Commissioner at the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) and as Deputy Registrar at the Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists (ORL) in BC, Canada. She previously worked at the House of Commons doing law and policy work on digital issues (including privacy and copyright), international trade, immigration, and indigenous matters, and completed law articles at the Samuelson-Glushko Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic. Deputy Twiss holds civil and common law degrees from McGill University, a Masters in Environmental Studies from YorkU and a BA in Geography and Psychology from UBC. She was called to the bar in Ontario in 2011 and is a member of the Law Society of British Columbia and a Fellow of Information Privacy (FIP) with the International Association of Privacy Professionals (CIPP/C, CIPP/E and CIPM), Deputy Twiss has long been interested in discussions at the intersection of law and policy that can lead to better prosperity for all.

Murray Rankin, K.C/*Former Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation/Former MP*
Until recently, he served as Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (2020-2024) and served briefly as Attorney General and Minister of Housing in the Government of British Columbia. Murray is a lawyer with expertise in environmental, Indigenous, and public law issues. He holds law degrees from the University of Toronto and Harvard Law School.

He served as the Member of Parliament for Victoria from 2012-19. During this period, he was appointed justice and attorney general critic, health critic, and served as NDP House Leader. From 2019-20, he was the chair of Canada's National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, overseeing all national security and intelligence activities carried out by the Government of Canada. Previously he was a University of Victoria professor of law and taught environmental and administrative law.

Nicola Collins/*Legal Counsel, Tsawwassen First Nation*
Nicola Collins serves as Legal Counsel for Tsawwassen First Nation, offering guidance on privacy law, real estate, governance, and economic development. She joined the Nation in 2022 after a decade as a solicitor in private practice, where she focused on real estate, estate planning, corporate, and commercial matters. Nicola holds a law degree from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Her extensive legal background spans both public and private sectors, and she is dedicated to advancing Indigenous jurisdiction and navigating complex legal frameworks.

Jennifer Jansen/*Manager of Government and Legislative Services, Tsawwassen First Nation*
Jennifer Jansen has been working with Tsawwassen First Nation since 2010. As the Manager of Government and Legislative Services, she oversees TFN's administration, information management, FOI and privacy, and leasehold resident relations functions. She also manages the Tsawwassen Legislative Assembly, the Advisory Council, and the Registry of Laws, and acts as the Tsawwassen Judicial Council Clerk. Jennifer graduated from UBC's iSchool (aka the School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies) in 2003 with a Master of Archival Studies - First Nations Curriculum Concentration. Previously she has worked for the District of West Vancouver as an Assistant Archivist, for the City of Vancouver as a Records Analyst, and as a Claims Researcher for the Indian Residential Schools Resolution sector of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada.

Kayla Black/*Spotlight: Child Welfare*
Kayla Black is a multidisciplinary Anishinaabekwe artist who practices photography, videography, and filmmaking. She stars in APTN's Unsettled Spirits as a paranormal investigator. Kayla is a support worker with KFT Families Society and is currently a board member for Indigenous Families Integrity Safety Certification. Kayla has lived experience as a child in the foster care system and brings these experiences into the work she collaborates on in Spotlight. She was born and raised on the Coast Salish lands and enjoys connecting with the people that call these territories home.

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On the record: FOI and journalism

One of the key functions of FOI law is to facilitate journalism in the public interest. Canada and BC have rich traditions of investigative journalism grounded in FOI research. This research is often challenging, however, and journalists working on pressing stories often run up against barriers presented by the letter of FOI law, the complexities of FOI requests, and the nature of information management in public bodies. On this panel, experienced investigative journalists will discuss the importance and opportunities associated with FOI-based journalism, common challenges, and ideas for change.

Mike Larsen/*President BC FIPA*
Mike Larsen is a faculty member in the Criminology Department at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, where he has taught since 2011. He lives on the shared, unceded traditional territories of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, Kwantlen, and other Coast Salish Peoples, and he teaches courses on criminology, law & society, surveillance and privacy, and crime and media. His research deals with access to information, privacy, and security practices, particularly as they involve the deprivation of liberty and contestations around government secrecy, public accountability, and the right to know. Mike is also the current President of the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (BC FIPA), a non-partisan, nonprofit society that is dedicated to promoting and defending freedom of information and privacy rights in Canada. You can find FIPA online at fipa.bc.ca.

Amanda Follett Hosgood/*Northern BC Report, The Tyee*
Amanda Follett Hosgood is The Tyee's northern B.C. reporter. She began her journalism career nearly 25 years ago at community newspapers in Alberta before moving to Wet'suwet'en territory in 2006. She has received national recognition for her work, including the 2025 Canadian Association of Journalists silver award for Freedom of Information Journalism. Earlier this year, Amanda received the 2026 Lieutenant Governor's BC Journalism Fellowship, which allowed her to do an in-depth reporting project on the decline in community news. She is currently spending time as a William Southam Journalism Fellow at Massey College in Toronto. In her usual life, Amanda lives with her family on a rural property just outside Smithers, B.C.

Francesca Fionda/*Data Lead, Spotlight: Child Welfare*
Francesca is a reporter, journalism instructor and a board member on multiple collaborative journalism projects. She's worked with national investigative news teams and locally-driven outlets to produce in-depth stories for video, online and podcasts. She currently reports with The Narwhal, an online, non-profit magazine focused on the natural world. As the first-ever recipient of the Lieutenant Governor's BC Journalism Fellowship, she spent months reporting on climate disasters in British Columbia. Her reporting on natural disasters has looked at racism in emergency management, economic impacts of sea level rise and community-driven solutions. She is also an adjunct professor of journalism and has taught trauma-informed interviewing, media law and data journalism. Francesca is a first-generation settler of Filipino and Italian ancestry. She currently lives, reports and teaches on the the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), Sel̓íl̓witulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and Stó:lō Nations.

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Access frustrated: working with abusive, unreasonable, and vexatious behaviour

When a small minority of applicants consume a disproportionate amount of finite resources system-wide, there are fewer resources for bona fide requests and respectful conduct. At the same time, resource asymmetries between applicants and public bodies means that restrictions on the right of access requires careful oversight. This practical and frank discussion will discuss recent changes to FIPPA, recent OIPC guidance and decisions, and approaches from seasoned experts in the field.

Ethan Plato/*Legal Counsel, OIPC BC*
Ethan is the Legal Counsel to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and Registrar of Lobbyists for British Columbia. He has worked in both official languages for all levels of government, as well as the private and non-profit sectors. Ethan holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Ottawa in International Development, a JD from the University of Victoria, and was called to the bar in British Columbia in 2018.

Matt Malone/*Research Director, Digitalization, Security & Democracy, Centre for International Governance Innovation*
Matt Malone is a lawyer and academic. He is also the Founder of Open by Default. Matt's main research interest pertains to the various ways law protects secret information, especially in the context of trade secrecy, confidential information, access to information, privacy, data protection, and cybersecurity.

Kate Phipps/*Partner, Arvay Finlay*
Kate Phipps is a partner in Arvay Finlay's Vancouver office. An administrative and constitutional litigator, she has extensive experience representing clients in complex public law, governance, judicial review, and appellate matters, appearing before all levels of court in British Columbia and the Supreme Court of Canada. She has particular expertise acting as tribunal counsel in judicial reviews of decisions by administrative bodies and offices of the legislature. In addition to her litigation practice, Kate provides strategic advice to government agencies and societies on governance, policy and regulatory issues.

Kate regularly speaks at continuing legal education conferences with respect to administrative law, and currently serves as Chair of the CBABC Administrative Law Section Executive. Before joining Arvay Finlay, Kate clerked then served as Legal Counsel to the Supreme Court of British Columbia. She previously articled and practised with the administrative and regulatory law group of a leading international law firm.

Suzanne Kennedy/*Partner, Harris and Company*
Suzanne has built a strong practice in access and privacy law. For nearly 30 years, she has been advising both public and private sector employers on their responsibilities as they navigate the implications of Canadian privacy laws, including British Columbia's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) and the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA). Suzanne provides a broad range of privacy related legal services including advising on privacy management programs, conducting privacy audits, supporting clients in privacy breach response and cyber security, policy development, training and advising on commercial contracts, data security and cloud services. Suzanne also has extensive experience in advising clients on their freedom of information and access obligations, including in proceedings before privacy commissioners in Canada. In addition to privacy law, Suzanne has extensive experience in education and health law. Suzanne has represented various healthcare and educational professionals and organizations, providing advice in a range of areas including employment, professional regulatory proceedings and compliance, court and administrative tribunal proceedings, procurement, and contract negotiations.