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PRIVACY COMMISSIONER
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News Release

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B.C. Information and Privacy Commissioner to investigate police information checks

VICTORIA — B.C. Information and Privacy Commissioner Elizabeth Denham will investigate the use of police information checks in British Columbia, in response to concerns about the amount and type of personal information these checks disclose.

Each year, thousands of record checks are processed by municipal police forces and the RCMP in B.C., many of which are for employment screening purposes. Citizens and civil society groups have raised questions about the scope, sensitivity and relevance of personal information accessed and disclosed by these checks.

In 2012, Commissioner Denham issued a detailed investigation report examining the use of criminal record checks by the B.C. government. The investigation announced today is broader in scope in that it includes police information checks occurring in the public and private sectors.

While a criminal record check is a report of an individual's prior convictions, penalties or outstanding charges pulled from a national police database, police information checks can contain a variety of details about an individual's interaction with police that have not been proven in court. Some examples include investigations that did not result in charges, charges that did not result in convictions, and information relating to an individual's mental health.

The Commissioner's investigation will not target a specific public body or organization, but will include consultations with law enforcement, employers, civil society groups and other stakeholders. A public report will be issued when the investigation is complete.

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