



OFFICE OF THE
INFORMATION &
PRIVACY COMMISSIONER
for British Columbia

Protecting privacy. Promoting transparency.

News Release

Sept. 22, 2015

**Statement from B.C. Information and Privacy Commissioner
regarding a Ministry of Education privacy breach**

VICTORIA—B.C. Information and Privacy Commissioner Elizabeth Denham issued the following statement in response to a serious privacy breach involving the Ministry of Education:

“On Friday, Sept. 18, my Office was informed by the Government’s Chief Information Officer of the disappearance of an unencrypted hard drive containing personal information and educational data of millions of B.C. students. This information had been compiled over a period of more than two decades, from 1986 to 2009.

“Upon receiving this report, I launched an investigation under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. This investigation will address the very serious privacy issues that arise from this breach and recommend mitigation strategies to prevent further occurrences. Government has committed to cooperating fully with my Office’s investigation.

“It is deeply concerning to learn about another case of a major privacy breach involving unencrypted data. When citizens entrust government with their personal information, they expect that it will be protected as required under provincial privacy law. The magnitude of this breach is especially troubling given that the education records on the external hard drive contained the personal information of more than three million students,” said Denham.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner is an independent officer of the legislature, mandated to oversee and enforce compliance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Personal Information Protection Act*. The Commissioner will release a public report at the conclusion of her investigation.

The Office will not make any further comments until the investigation is complete. The completion date for the Commissioner’s investigation is not known at this time.

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