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Alberta's Information and Privacy Commissioner responds to Ryerson study on workplace monitoring

Alberta's Information and Privacy Commissioner responded to a study about the ability of companies to monitor the activities of their employees. A Ryerson University study, "Under the Radar" surveyed companies found that there is an increasing variety of techniques available to employers including closed circuit television, e-mail monitoring and GPS tracking of company vehicles. The study also found that senior executives often were without guidance on the potential intrusiveness of such technologies on employee privacy.

Frank Work says notwithstanding an increased capacity for companies to use technology to monitor employees, employers need to be aware that Alberta is one of three provinces in Canada which has legislation to protect employee information in the private sector. The *Personal Information Protection Act* sets out the rules for information privacy, including what is expected of employers and employees. "It has been my experience that many companies in Alberta have awareness of their obligations under the Act", said Work. He adds, "Most companies and organizations want to make sure they are complying with the law. We have spoken to many companies seeking guidance from us before implementing practices that impact employee privacy."

The Information and Privacy Commissioner's Office works with companies and industry associations to ensure compliance. "There are many educational tools and investigation reports available to assist organizations in their policy development with guidance to consider when implementing new technology", added the Commissioner.

The following investigation reports recently released by the Commissioner address issues of employee surveillance:

<http://www.oipc.ab.ca/ims/client/upload/ACFBD5F.pdf>

http://www.oipc.ab.ca/ims/client/upload/P2005_IR_004May13.pdf

<http://www.oipc.ab.ca/ims/client/upload/Investigation%20Report%20P2005-IR-009.pdf>

<http://www.oipc.ab.ca/ims/client/upload/Investigation%20Report%20P2005-IR-008.pdf>

The Ryerson study included interviews with 15 large, medium and small businesses. The objective was to provide an overview of workplace privacy concerns and practices from the perspective of the employer.

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