



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**COMMISSIONER INVESTIGATING MISSING TAPES CONTAINING HEALTH INFORMATION**

**Victoria**—Information and Privacy Commissioner David Loukidelis made public today that his office is investigating the BC Ministry of Health over a breach of privacy involving the loss of unencrypted magnetic tapes containing the personal information of over 100 British Columbia residents.

The tapes were apparently shipped from New Brunswick's health department under an agreement for reimbursement of expenses incurred by the New Brunswick government for health services provided to BC residents visiting New Brunswick. The tapes never arrived at BC Ministry of Health. It is not clear to the Commissioner's office when the tapes went missing. The Commissioner was notified only yesterday of the situation and immediately opened a file.

"I am deeply concerned that unencrypted personal data has apparently been shipped in a manner that on its face doesn't meet the Ministry's legal duty to take reasonable steps to protect personal information", the Commissioner stated.

The Commissioner at once requested and obtained a commitment from the Ministry that it would immediately cease the practice of sending the data on unencrypted magnetic tapes. He also got the Ministry's commitment that they would immediately notify affected individuals of the loss of their personal information.

The Commissioner has received a commitment from senior management of the Ministry's full co-operation with his investigation. "I am appalled that health information is being transmitted in such an insecure way," the Commissioner stated. "Even if the tapes require proprietary hardware and software to read them, this puts the privacy of British Columbians at risk."

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