



Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario
Commissaire à l'information et à la protection de la vie privée de l'Ontario

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IPC Digest | December 2017 Commissioner's Year-End Message

Dec 27 2017

Summary:



As 2017 draws to a close, I would like to take a moment to update you on an incredibly busy and productive year at the IPC, one in which my office worked hard to deliver on its mandate on behalf of all Ontarians.

Our Year in Numbers

A quick look at the IPC's year in numbers and you can see just how busy we were this year. In 2017, IPC staff:

- responded to nearly 6000 [public email inquiries](#) from provincial and municipal institutions, health care professionals and everyday Ontarians
- opened nearly 2300 appeal and complaint files
- delivered more than 100 [presentations](#) on leading and emerging access, privacy and health privacy issues facing our public and health sector stakeholders
- published more than a dozen important [guidance documents](#) related to [PHIPA](#), [FIPPA](#) and [MFIPPA](#)
- made presentations to legislative committees on three bills, including [Bill 68, Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, 2017](#), [Bill 84, the Medical Assistance in Dying Statute Law Amendment Act, 2017](#) and [Bill 89, the Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act](#)

A Closer Look

I would like to share with you a few more IPC highlights from 2017.

Government and Big Data

2017 began with our signature Privacy Day event. This year's theme was on [Government and Big Data](#) and featured privacy and big data experts who offered solutions to the various privacy risks that governments face in an increasingly big data world. While big data empowers governments to develop evidence-based programs and policies that can benefit Ontarians, the IPC used this special occasion to once again call on the Ontario government to modernize our access and privacy laws to ensure that public institutions harness big data analytics in a privacy-protective manner. We also used this occasion to release our [Big Data and Your Privacy](#) fact sheet to help Ontarians better understand big data and how it can affect their privacy. My office remains steadfast in our commitment to protect your privacy and will continue to work closely with public institutions to ensure that the great promise of big data respects and protects your privacy rights.

Open Government

In March, we published our [Open Government and Protecting Privacy](#) guidance document to encourage provincial and municipal institutions to be more transparent with the people they serve and whose privacy they protect. The IPC has long argued that privacy is not a barrier to open government and with this guidance document we reaffirmed our commitment to help institutions proactively protect Ontarians' privacy as they advance their open government agendas.

Award Winning De-Identification Guidelines

In September, our [De-identification Guidelines for Structured Data](#) won the inaugural International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners' award for excellence in research. "De-identification" is the general term for the process of removing personal information from a record or data set, thereby protecting the privacy of individuals. Our guidelines are the first of their kind in Canada to use plain language to explain sophisticated de-identification concepts, with the benefit of being useful to a very wide audience. I was honoured to accept this award on behalf of Ontarians and it was especially gratifying to have our efforts recognized on the global stage.

PHIPA Amendments

This year there were a number of amendments to Ontario's health privacy law. The most recent amendment came into force in October and requires anyone who deals with your personal health information to report certain privacy breaches to my office. The IPC believes this new reporting requirement will better protect your information and improve accountability and transparency across Ontario's health care system. To help health care providers meet this new requirement, we published detailed [privacy breach reporting guidelines](#) that explain reporting criteria and outline when the IPC must be notified of a privacy breach.

Expanded IPC Mandate

Looking ahead, 2018 promises to be a year of new opportunities and challenges for the IPC. My office will see its jurisdiction expand when the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* comes into force. With the historic expansion of our mandate, children aid societies and other service providers will soon be subject to the IPC's scrutiny and oversight. For the first time, Ontarians will have the right to access their personal information held by these service providers and file privacy complaints against them. In the meantime, the IPC is working with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth and the child welfare sector to prepare for this important milestone, which we believe will usher in an era of even greater public accountability in Ontario.

Final Thoughts

My office is honoured to work on your behalf every day and is more committed than ever to protecting and advancing your

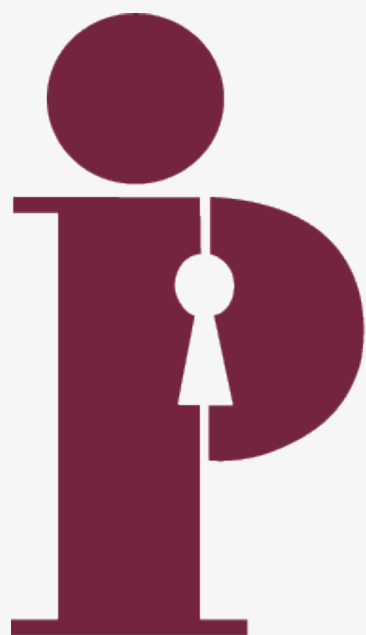
access and privacy rights. We feel confident that the next 12 months will see the IPC build on the excellent progress we made in 2017.

As always, please [contact us](#) if you have any questions or concerns. And don't forget to connect with us on our various social media channels ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#)) to learn about the latest IPC news.

I wish you a safe and happy holiday season!

Brian Beamish, Commissioner

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