

Internal Review – Interim Report

Privacy Breach
Ministry of Housing and Social Development

Office of the Chief Information Officer
Ministry of Citizens' Services
January 29, 2010



Review of Privacy Breach/Information Disclosure Involving the Ministry of Housing and Social Development

On December 16, 2009, the Minister of Citizens' Services, the Honourable Ben Stewart, requested that the Government Chief Information Officer, Ministry of Citizens' Services, undertake an internal review and investigate a privacy breach and information disclosure involving the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. The findings of this review would be reported out on January 29, 2010 at the same time as another review of an earlier privacy breach involving the Ministries of Housing and Social Development, and Children and Family Development.

Background:

On September 16, 2009, officials at the Ministry of Housing and Social Development began an investigation into alleged misuse by an employee of government resources including email, internet and telephone for non-work purposes. During the course of the investigation, Ministry officials became aware of possible inappropriate emails being sent by the employee to non-governmental email addresses.

On November 30, 2009, it was determined that the emails could have included sensitive and personal information, which may have been sent to third party outside of Canada. At that time, a privacy breach was identified and notification letters were sent to the three potentially affected clients.

On December 1, 2009, the employee was suspended pending the outcome of the review of the employee's misuse of government email.

From December 1, 2009 to January 18, 2010, the Government Chief Information Officer undertook an internal review to determine the circumstances associated with the information breach, including a review of privacy breach and information management protocols. This included the handling of this situation, remedial actions and any potential recommendations to improve government information security and access related to this circumstance.

On December 1, 2009, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner announced a separate and independent review of the incident.

On January 18, 2010, based on the internal findings related to this incident, the review was suspended and the matter referred to law enforcement agencies for investigation. On January 26, 2010, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner advised the Government Chief Information Officer that they had suspended their review and would monitor as they were aware of the transfer of this matter for police investigation. After the investigation is complete, they may provide a response at that time.

As this matter has now been referred to law enforcement for investigation, we are unable to provide any further information or findings from this review to date. As soon as this investigation is complete, a summary report and recommendations will be provided. Government will not be commenting further at this time.

Opportunities

Through the review process related to this incident, many of the observations noted to date support the recommendations included in the Government Chief Information Officer's (GCIO) Internal Review, Privacy Breach, Ministries of Housing and Social Development and Ministry of Children and Family Development Report, dated January 29, 2010.

Both reviews support the following recommendations:

- *Establish a central authority within the GCIO with overall responsibility for managing information incidents including policy, audit, investigations and police liaison*
- *Consolidate and communicate corporate policies that provide direction to employees on how to manage, handle and ensure the security of personal information in their possession outside of the workplace*
- *Enhance education and training to ensure all employees are aware of information privacy management obligations and practice*
- *Ensure human resource incident investigations or reviews involving government information include timely consultation and information management direction from the GCIO*

Further recommendations will be made specific to this review once the law enforcement investigation is complete.