



Yukon
Information
and Privacy
Commissioner

211 Hawkins Street, Suite 201
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1X3
T: 867.667.8468
F: 867.667.8469
1-800-661-0408 ext. 8468
www.ombudsman.yk.ca

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Privacy Commissioners across Canada raise concerns and make recommendations regarding COVID-19 contact tracing

Federal, provincial and territorial commissioners issue joint statement

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner, Diane McLeod-McKay, has joined with her colleagues across the country to issue a statement on government plans for COVID-19 contact tracing.

One of the measures currently being contemplated or already being used in some jurisdictions in Canada and around the world is the launch of smart phone apps to help prevent spread of the novel coronavirus. Many of the apps are aimed at locating people who have been near someone who is, or may be, a carrier of COVID-19, as well as to notify those people.

Commissioners decided to issue a common statement to Canadians because these apps raise important privacy risks.

“Because of the urgency of limiting the spread of the virus, we are seeing governments contemplate extraordinary measures that have not been undertaken previously,” said McLeod-McKay. “In some cases, these measures will have significant implications for privacy and other rights that are fundamental to Canadians. Through this joint statement, I and other privacy commissioners across the country are encouraging governments to follow a number of key principles if they decide to use technology in this way. The choices that our governments make are important not just for today, but will also shape the future of our country.”

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The statement, which can be viewed [here](#), outlines a number of principles that governments should use if they implement contact tracing applications. For example, the commissioners recommend that the use of the apps must be voluntary and based on specific and meaningful consent for all the public health purposes intended. As well, there should be a high level of government transparency and accountability, in order to build public trust.

Amongst other things, the statement also recommends that appropriate security safeguards are put in place, that there should be third-party oversight of the contact tracing measures, and that if the measures are not effective, they should be discontinued and any personal information should be destroyed.

The Ombudsman, Information and Privacy Commissioner, and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner is an independent officer of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. For more information, please go to www.ombudsman.yk.ca.

Contact:

Elaine Schiman

Communications Manager

Office of the Yukon Ombudsman, Information and Privacy Commissioner & Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner

elaine.schiman@ombudsman.yk.ca

867-332-4555

867-334-2975

www.ombudsman.yk.ca

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