



News Release

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**Keep it private - your Facebook password should not be shared:  
Commissioner Cavoukian advises people to protect their online social media profiles**

TORONTO, May 3, 2012 /CNW/ - Spurred by numerous recent media reports of employers requesting Facebook passwords from job candidates, Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, launched a paper today to provide Ontarians with practical advice on how to protect their online privacy in the increasingly complex social media world.

Entitled "[Reference Check: Is Your Boss Watching? The New World of Social Media: Privacy and Your Facebook Profile.](#)" the paper will be officially launched this evening in Toronto during a presentation by Commissioner Cavoukian at international law firm Baker & McKenzie.

"Passwords are meant to be kept private, and I want to be clear that the practice of employers requesting personal passwords from their current or potential future staff is fundamentally wrong," said Commissioner Cavoukian.

"Canada's human rights and privacy laws provide strong protections for job applicants when it comes to improper practices, such as employers requesting personal passwords. However, everyone using social media must remain vigilant when it comes to guarding their own personal information."

The paper offers true-to-life examples of improper practices by employers, provides context, and most importantly, offers practical tips to protect your privacy in today's constantly-evolving online world. Some of the issues covered in depth in the paper include:

- Think hard before you click;
- Review all the information about you that lives online;
- Remove potentially-damaging information & photos;
- Apply strong privacy controls to all of your personal information;
- Know your rights: employment, human rights & privacy laws;
- Build up a positive online social media profile.

"It is absolutely crucial to remember that anything you post online may stay there forever, in one form or another, so think carefully before you post," said Commissioner Cavoukian.

"With 86 per cent of Canadian Internet users having a Facebook profile, my sincere hope is that our paper will remind people to use social media sites wisely - posting information with their eyes wide open, and considering the potential risks to their employment - current and future."

"Job candidates should preserve their legally-protected right against what the courts have now labeled 'intrusion into seclusion'," agrees Mark Ellis of Baker & McKenzie. "As counsel to many of Canada's largest employers, we advise companies to respect the legal boundaries regarding investigation of any



applicant. While an employer's review of outward-facing social media pages is proper and valuable due diligence, probing beyond the password-protected wall constitutes unwarranted invasion of privacy."

### **About the IPC**

The Information and Privacy Commissioner is appointed by and reports to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and is independent of the government of the day. The Commissioner's mandate includes overseeing the access and privacy provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, as well as the *Personal Health Information Protection Act*, which applies to both public and private sector health information custodians. A vital component of the Commissioner's mandate is to help educate the public about access and privacy issues.

For further information:

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