

Commissioner Cavoukian Applauds Agreement Protecting YouTube Users' Privacy

TORONTO – The copyright infringement lawsuit between Viacom and Google raised serious privacy concerns, said Dr. Ann Cavoukian, Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner. Specifically, the Commissioner objected to Judge Louis Stanton's recent order to disclose YouTube users' personal information (user ID, IP address, and visitor ID). On July 14, 2008, Google (which owns the website, YouTube) and Viacom signed an agreement whereby Google will be allowed to anonymize data that otherwise could identify individual YouTube users, while still complying with the court's order.

"I applaud Google and Viacom for being responsive to widespread international concerns over the privacy rights of individual YouTube users," said Commissioner Cavoukian. "In conjunction with the other terms of the original protection order, imposing strict limitations on the use and disclosure of YouTube users' information, I am reasonably satisfied that users' privacy will be protected. No longer will privacy be caught in the middle of, what is essentially, a legal disagreement between large multinationals."

"My reading of the agreement is that Google will substitute alternate unique values for users' identifiers, yet preserve all correlations and *pre-existing interdependencies*. This means that while users' online activities will remain discrete and linkable, it will be both technically and legally difficult, if not impossible, to associate these profiles with real-world identifiable individuals."

"That said, the details of the specific protocol by which this enormous logging database will be anonymized have yet to be agreed upon or publicly known. And, as they say, the devil is in the detail."

Since one of her favourite expressions is, "trust, but verify," the Commissioner looks forward to learning the details of this protocol, due by July 21, 2008. Consistent with Google's commitment to keep their users informed of important developments in this case, the Commissioner urges Google to make these details publically available.

The full text of the agreement between Google, Viacom and other companies party to the lawsuit may be found at:

http://64.233.179.110/blog_resources/google_youtube_viacom.pdf

Media Contact:

Bob Spence, Communications Co-ordinator,
Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario

Direct line: 416-326-3939; **Cell phone:** 416-873-9746; **Toll free:** 800-387-0073

E-mail: bob.spence@ipc.on.ca; **Website:** www.ipc.on.ca