



NEWS RELEASE – April 6, 2008

The Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner has again intervened for the second time in three weeks to protect a large number of records of patient personal health information found abandoned. In this case the patient records were located in Moose Jaw.

In response to an anonymous complaint, staff from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) attended at the Hammond Building at 310 Main Street North in Moose Jaw on April 2, 2008. In vacant office space the OIPC staff found six large boxes containing what appeared to be physician records on several hundred patients in the Moose Jaw region. These records were in an empty office without a lock on the door. The records are now safe in secure storage. Further investigation led to the discovery of more than 73 ‘banker boxes’ of patient files in the basement to which a number of the building’s occupants had ready access. These records appear to relate to multiple physicians who practiced at one time or another in Moose Jaw.

The personal health information in the files included at least one completed sexual assault kit.

The Commissioner will undertake an investigation under *The Health Information Protection Act* (HIPA) to determine the circumstances of the abandonment of these records. This investigation will determine which trustee last had custody of these records. Physicians in Saskatchewan are health information trustees and have statutory duties to ensure that there are reasonable physical, technical and administrative safeguards in place for all personal health information in their custody or control. These statutory duties are reinforced by an offence provision in HIPA and a penalty provision of a maximum fine of \$50,000 for an individual and \$500,000 for an organization.

The Commissioner will report to the public once the source of the abandoned records has been determined and arrangements have been made for permanent secure storage of these records.

- 30 -

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