



## NEWS RELEASE – March 24, 2008

### **The Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner has intervened to protect a large number of patient files found abandoned in Yorkton.**

In response to an anonymous complaint, a Portfolio Officer from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner attended at 31 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North in Yorkton on March 17, 2008. In vacant office space the Portfolio Officer found 5 large boxes containing what appear to be physician records on several hundred patients in the Yorkton region. The records are now safe in the interim custody of the Commissioner.

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. Patients in Saskatchewan have a statutory right to apply in writing for access to their personal health information. In the event that any individual requires access they are encouraged to await further information from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner as the investigation proceeds.

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