



BC FREEDOM OF
INFORMATION
AND PRIVACY
ASSOCIATION

The BC Services Card, and why you should be concerned about it

What is the BC Services Card?

It's an ID card that combines both the drivers license and the provincial health care card.

Is that all it does? Doesn't sound too scary to me.

Right now that is all it does. However, it is a key part of the 'Government 2.0' plan, which will link large amounts of personal information both inside and outside government. [The government plans on using it as the principal tool for gaining access to most government services.](#) Not only that, but they are also talking about combining it with your credit cards, transit pass and other non-government information. That is a lot of access to a lot of personal information.

It's a government system. It should be secure, right?

Sadly no. The BC government has had lots of problems with its information management systems. [In her recent report on the data breach at the Ministry of Health](#) (one of two bodies currently linked into the BC Services Card), Information and Privacy Commissioner Elizabeth Denham found that the ministry had essentially no audit capability, so they had no idea who had access to health information or what they did with it. People working at the Ministry also had access to way more personal health information than they needed to do their jobs.

Maybe the government should fix the problems at the Ministry of Health before moving on grandiose plans to link a lot more of our sensitive personal information.

What do you mean when you call the BC Services Card an 'ID card'?

The BC Services Card is the first of a number of provincial cards that will be rolled out in the next few years. BC gave the contract to a company called SecureKey, without allowing anyone else to bid. That company is also providing the federal government with ID management services, and has been given a similar untendered contract by the government of Alberta. Other provinces are expected to follow in due course.

Once these cards are rolled out in each province and linked through a single private company, [this will amount to having a national ID Card](#).

But the BC government's other IT projects work well, don't they?

There have been some [spectacular failures in recent years](#), usually with these big data linkage projects. The government is spending millions of dollars to replace the scrapped \$100 million BCeSIS education data base, and the government's own consultants have reported on how the hundreds of millions spent on the Integrated Case Management system still haven't produced a working system.

What do we know about the BC Services Card?

[Not a lot](#). The government has been reluctant to provide information about the project and what it will mean for British Columbians. BC FIPA has submitted a number FOI requests about the project going back to 2011, but very little information has come out.

What does the Privacy Commissioner have to say?

After taking a look at the card program, Information and Privacy Commissioner Elizabeth Denham [said she wanted the government to conduct "fulsome" consultations](#) before proceeding with further phases of the implementation of the card. However the Card [continues to be rolled out](#).

Can I say 'no' to the Card?

The ID Card is already being rolled out, but it won't be mandatory until 2018. In the meantime, the BC Government is [holding a public consultation to find out what people think](#).

OK, now you have me concerned. What can I do about this?

You can make your voice heard!

The government is running a consultation on the Card. You can take the survey at <http://gov.bc.ca/digitalservices> and voice your specific concerns. The survey does have space for your comments.

Or write to the province directly at:

**PO Box 9029, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8V 9L9**

Let them know that you have a problem with the latest boondoggle in the making.