

NEWS RELEASE
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FIPA to undertake major study on how our cars watch us

Ground breaking research made possible by grant from Federal Privacy Commissioner's Office

VANCOUVER, B.C.—The BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association is launching a year-long study to examine the effect of electronic monitoring systems in our vehicles on our privacy rights and consumer choice.

Our vehicles are no longer simple mechanical devices which provide us with transportation, but electronic platforms capable of remarkable feats. In doing so they collect and process large amounts of information, much of which is personal information and some of it highly sensitive.

For decades, vehicle manufacturers have been using ever-increasing amounts of electronic technology to run the systems that provide more powerful, yet economical powerplants, not to mention electronic amusements and diversions. Now the growing use of telematics by vehicle manufacturers and insurers raises significant privacy concerns, including:

- To what extent will automobile owners and drivers have choice over how and when their vehicles are being tracked?
- What happens when use of telematics becomes industry norm? Will those who opt out for privacy reasons have to pay a premium to maintain their privacy? Or will that option simply disappear?
- Will consumers be able to make truly informed decisions if the choice is between concrete benefits and real but elusive risks?
- Are there viable alternatives to what the automobile and insurance industries are developing that can provide the benefits consumers seek while not sacrificing their rights?

“We are thrilled to be able to undertake this important research which will have important implications for privacy and consumer rights,” said FIPA executive director Vincent Gogolek. “The decision to fund our research shows how important this rapidly growing field has become.”

The lead researcher for the study will be Philippa Lawson, a well-known lawyer with considerable experience in both privacy and consumer law. The project is conducted in collaboration with Prof Andrew Clement and the New Transparency: Surveillance and Social Sorting project at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto.

Funding for the research was announced earlier today by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner in Ottawa: http://www.priv.gc.ca/media/nr-c/2014/nr-c_140430_cp_e.asp

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