



Public Interest Alberta

July 22, 2022

VIA EMAIL

TO: Jill Clayton, Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta:

Re: Sharing of personal and private information of tenants on social media platforms by landlords in Alberta

Dear Jill Clayton, Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta:

It would be an understatement to say that recent media reports (“Edmonton renters cry foul...”, Edmonton Journal, July 4, 2022) of “bad tenants” lists are concerning and a matter of public interest. Considering the deepening housing crisis in Alberta and the barriers many individuals face finding and maintaining secure and adequate housing, disenfranchised tenants especially – the news that landlords are creating, managing and participating in databases “blacklisting” tenants is especially sinister.

As evidence mounts of multiple social media groups with tenant blacklists (at least 2 [confirmed](#) in Edmonton), I am writing to you today to request an expedited investigation of these and any additional potential breaches of tenant privacy and protection of personal information.

Alberta’s *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)* recognizes the rights of individuals to have their personal information protected and sets out reasonable limits to the use of that information. As you are well aware, Section 1(i) of *PIPA* defines an individual acting in a commercial capacity as an “organization” for the purposes of the Act, meaning that landlords are subject to *PIPA*.

Public Interest Alberta and our allies are generally concerned that this illegal practice of improperly collecting and sharing – without consent – tenant’s private and personal information for the purposes of housing discrimination and exclusion, potentially denying housing options to Albertans is occurring. An urgent investigation is necessary to protect the information and privacy of these individuals.

Let us be clear: privacy is a right according to Canadian and Alberta law. Conversely,



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private individuals who choose to become landlords already have reasonable legal powers to request information from a potential renter. The secretive and insular nature of these landlord blacklists indicates an awareness amongst landlords participating that these practices are likely illegal..

There are real and ongoing risks to privacy and access to housing if these lists are not investigated. Individuals may notice a pattern of housing exclusion when trying to secure adequate housing, which aside from the illegalities of our privacy laws is also a human rights violation under the National Housing Act. However there is no way for an individual to verify this, nor is there any recourse for information being shared without their knowledge or consent.

We appreciate the seriousness with which your office has engaged on this matter to date and trust this will extend to a swift and thorough formal investigation with the potential for any and all penalties being explored as a response to any breaches of the Act.

Thank you for continuing to engage on this important issue. We look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad L', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bradley Lafortune
Executive Director
Public Interest Alberta

Cc.

Minister Nate Glubish

MLA Jon Carson