



**For immediate release  
September 22, 2016**

### **Privacy regulators study finds Internet of Things shortfalls**

HALIFAX - Six in ten Internet of Things devices don't properly tell customers how their personal information is being used, an international study has found.

The study, by 25 data protection regulators around the world, looked at devices like smart electricity meters, internet-connected thermostats and watches that monitor health, and considered how well companies communicate privacy matters to their customers.

The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for Nova Scotia joined the study, reviewing the privacy protocols of 14 Internet of Things devices produced by nine manufacturers and available in Nova Scotia retail stores. Most of the devices available in Nova Scotia stores were health or health-care related.

The report showed that internationally:

- 59 per cent of devices failed to adequately explain to customers how their personal information was collected, used and disclosed,
- 68 per cent failed to properly explain how information was stored,
- 72 per cent failed to explain how customers could delete their information off the device, and
- 38 per cent failed to include easily identifiable contact details if customers had privacy concerns.

The results of the study of Nova Scotia devices reflected broadly similar results, though Nova Scotia customers could consistently and easily identify a privacy contact to address their concerns.

“The devices we found can help Nova Scotians get healthy, stay healthy, and manage their conditions in their own homes,” said Catherine Tully, Information and Privacy Commissioner for Nova Scotia. “But they are using sensitive personal data to do that, and the companies that produce them need to protect that data as carefully as they would protect financial assets or proprietary information.”

Concerns were also raised around medical devices that sent reports back to treating physicians via unencrypted email.



The data protection authorities looked at more than 300 devices. Authorities will now consider action against any devices or services thought to have been breaking data protection laws.

The work was coordinated by the Global Privacy Enforcement Network, and follows previous reports on online services for children, website privacy policies and mobile phone apps.

The study is being led by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in the UK. Steve Eckersley, ICO Head of Enforcement, said:

“This technology can improve our homes, our health and our happiness. But that shouldn't be at the cost of our privacy. Companies making these devices need to be clear how they're protecting customers. We would encourage companies to properly consider the privacy impact on individuals before they go to market with their product and services. If consumers are nervous that devices aren't using their data safely and sensibly, then they won't use them.”

By looking at the Internet of Things internationally, privacy and data protection commissioners have been able to take a broad view of the topic. Commissioners from around the world will look to build on that knowledge, working with the related industries and looking specifically at companies who might not have done enough to ensure effective privacy protections.

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