



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

February 28, 2020

Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner releases public awareness tool coinciding with the release of Review Report

HALIFAX – The public awareness tool [*Protect Against Phishing*](#) has been published today to coincide with the public release of Review Report 20-02 to draw attention to the serious threat phishing presents. Phishing is when an attacker sends a fake message to try to get the recipient to give out sensitive information like a username and password.

Phishing attacks have risen in complexity, believability, and potential for harm in recent years. They are a phenomenon that anyone operating with modern technology such as email and internet access needs to be aware of and concerned about.

What is the risk from a successful phishing attack? How should an organization go about assessing the risk and communicating it to affected individuals? What safeguards can a health information custodian that uses email as an integral part of its information practices implement? These are the central questions of Review Report 20-02 which reviews the Nova Scotia Health Authority's response to a successful phishing attack on its email system.

At their heart, phishing attacks are attempts by malicious actors to gain access to protected systems by preying on individuals. Once an attack is successful, the attacker can use whatever is gained in the attack to cause harm. Harm from phishing attacks includes planting viruses and other malicious software on systems or devices, encrypting files and refusing to release them unless a ransom is paid, stealing sensitive information, fraud, and sending out new rounds of phishing messages from a commandeered email account.

The public awareness tool released today can help people avoid taking the bait from phishing. The Review Report released today can help organizations know how to respond to a phishing attack. Both documents can be accessed on the OIPC's website: <https://oipc.novascotia.ca>

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Media contact:

Janet Burt-Gerrans, Director of Investigations & Mediation (acting)

Phone: 902-424-4684

Email: oipcns@novascotia.ca

Twitter: [@NSInfoPrivacy](https://twitter.com/NSInfoPrivacy)

