



**REMARKS**

**BY**

**HON. ZHIVARGO LAING, M.P.**

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE**

**AT**

**THE WEBSITE LAUNCH**

**OFFICE OF THE**

**DATA PROTECTION COMMISSIONER OF THE**

**BAHAMAS**

**MINISTRY OF FINANCE**

**MONDAY, 10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2007**

**9:00 A.M.**

I am delighted to participate in the launch of this premier Website for the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner of The Bahamas.

In this modern world governments near and far are challenged to provide avenues to ensure that the privacy rights of its citizens are protected. In addition, we in government are also mandated to seek ways to improve efficiency and keep our people safe in a post 9-11 environment. The promotion of privacy rights and safety concerns is paramount. Together privacy and safety are two of the main ingredients of focus among data protection and privacy authorities around the world. With the enactment of The Data Protection (Privacy of Personal Information) Act 2003 the government has put in place a crucial element with regard to the privacy of personal information.

The Data Protection (Privacy of Personal Information (POI)) Act 2003 came into operation on 2<sup>nd</sup>, April, 2007. Its main purpose is to “protect the privacy of individuals in relation to personal data and to regulate the collection, processing, keeping, use and disclosure of certain information relating to individuals and to provide for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.”

Incidentally, The Data Protection (POI) Act 2003 was one of three parts of the Government’s E-Commerce enabling package that was passed that year.

The other two were the Computer Misuse Act ( to make provisions securing computer material against unauthorized access or modification and for connected purposes); and the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (to provide for the legal recognition of electronic writing, electronic contracts, electronic signatures and original information in electronic form in relation to commercial and other transactions and to provide for the facilitation of electronic transactions and related matters).

We are here today to launch this Website which has been developed to provide the Bahamian public with access to information about the supervision and regulation of the Data Protection Act (the Act). The site is also intended to provide the Commissioner with an effective medium to keep the public informed as it relates to government policy and the development of international standards for the use and disclosure of personal information.

The Commissioner, a form of ombudsman, is a corporation sole and is independent in the performance of his duties. His mission is to protect and promote the privacy rights of individuals by:-

- Administrating and enforcing the provisions of the Act.
- Promoting the observance of good practice by data controllers within the requirements of the Act.

- Influencing thinking on privacy and processing of personal information matters on a local and global basis.
- Discharging, as the national supervisory authority, various functions relating to or arising from any international obligations The Bahamas may have or is seeking to be a party to, in connection with data protection.

Other features of the Website include:

- A section on what are likely to be frequently asked questions.
- Guidance on how to lodge a complaint, complete with the relevant complaint form and information on how your complaint will be handled by the Office of the Commissioner.

- Information on the very topical subject of Identity Theft.

Finally, this Website is intended to provide information on the law and offer a useful point of reference and guidance while fulfilling its mission to protect and promote the privacy rights of individuals.

I encourage all Bahamians to make maximum use of this facility and we welcome your feedback of suggestions and/or comments, especially your complaints about data protection (Privacy) concerns. We aim to protect and promote your fundamental rights to privacy through this media and in any other manner we can.

**Thank you.**