RDN Investigation into Access to Information Conducted

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) has conducted an internal investigation in response to anonymous emails sent to the RDN. The first email, sent on November 22, was caught by the RDN's spam filters and not delivered. A second email, sent from a different email address, was received on November 24 and led to the discovery of the first email which had been blocked. The emails raised concerns about access to information through the RDN GIS (Geographical Information System) platform - an online search tool available to the public that contains information on properties within the RDN. The RDN's IT Department responded immediately and locked down systems while the vulnerability was investigated. The investigation determined that land ownership information that was accessed through the GIS platform was not private in nature and is within the public domain.

On December 1, another access to the system was alleged by the same individual. The RDN again investigated to ensure the system was secure. The RDN has heightened its system security based on the information gathered through the investigation and has removed ownership information from the GIS platform. The public may still use the GIS platform and other RDN online systems safely.

"The RDN takes the protection of information very seriously and has systems and procedures in place to ensure the security of its data and respond to any potential vulnerability," said RDN Chair Tyler Brown.

The initial incident, as well as the second alleged access to information, has been reported to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC). The OIPC has acknowledged receipt and has assigned an investigator. Detailed information was also provided to the RCMP who are investigating the incident.

The RDN utilizes many tools and technologies to secure information and to keep pace with emerging threats and vulnerabilities. The RDN's mandate is to protect private information but to be as open and transparent as possible. While the RDN has robust security systems in place, the RDN is engaging an external organization that specializes in network and cyber security to proactively review the RDN's security and systems and to provide recommendations on how the RDN may further protect all information.

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