



New Proposed Cyberbullying Law (C-13) is well-intentioned but introduces serious risks to personal privacy

June 10, 2014

The Canadian Library Association (CLA) welcomes the new proposed cyberbullying laws aimed at protecting Canada's youth against cybercrime. However, the CLA believes that there are several aspects of Bill C-13 that are worrisome and that have major implications for the privacy of Canadians. Based on the scope of the anti-cyberbullying measures, the CLA's position is that Bill C-13 provides law enforcement agencies with greater access to private information such as metadata since the Bill allows internet service providers to voluntarily hand over private customer information to policing agencies without facing civil or criminal liability. As such, while Bill C-13 emphasizes judicial oversight when requesting private information from internet service providers by providing warrants to legitimate private information requests, since the Bill has no provisions which hold internet service providers (ISPs) accountable, it has the potential to result in major privacy violations for Canadians. More specifically, the CLA is concerned that Canadian libraries will be unable to provide effective library services to their users since libraries will be unable to ensure the necessary protections for patrons accessing their networks and resources.

To elaborate, CLA believes that Bill C-13 provides policing agencies greater access to metadata, which is the information that ISPs and phone companies keep on every call and email. In some ways, metadata can be more revealing than the substance of a phone call or email. For instance, mobile phone metadata allows police to pinpoint the geographic location of Canadians, who they are talking to, the duration of the conversation, which devices are being used, and so on. Allowing policing agencies access to such private metadata to without any mechanism of accountability in place harbours the potential for the misuse of the private information of Canadians. The CLA recommends that the Government of Canada work with the Privacy Commissioner of Canada and amend the Bill to better protect the privacy of Canadians.

The Canadian Library Association/Association canadienne des bibliothèques (CLA/ACB) is the national voice for Canada's library communities, representing the interests of libraries, library workers, and all those concerned about enhancing the quality of life of Canadians through information and literacy. CLA/ACB represents 1410 library workers, libraries and library supporters; and Canadian libraries serve in excess of 34 million Canadians through the nation's public, school, academic, government and special libraries.

For more information:

Valoree McKay, CAE

Executive Director

613-232-9625

vmckay@cla.ca