

CLA Statement on Telecommunications Privacy

The Canadian Library Association is alarmed at recent reports that government agencies in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom are monitoring the telecommunications of citizens and foreigners with apparently little oversight or accountability. The Canadian Library Association's [Position Statement on Access to Information and Communication Technology](#) states that "the collection of personal information should be limited to that which is necessary for the purposes identified by the organization," and that consent should be required for both the collection and the use or disclosure of such information. Further, the Statement condemns the trading or selling of personal information without the permission of affected individuals. Given the global nature of Internet communications, CLA is concerned regarding the potentially unlawful collection of private information about the Canadian public, including potentially unlawful access to the confidential borrowing, searching, and account records of library users in all sectors of library services in Canada, whether public, post-secondary, school, or other types of libraries.

CLA calls on Canada's intelligence gathering agencies, particularly the Communications Security Establishment Canada (CSEC), to be more transparent regarding the information that is collected about Canadians, the manner in which it is collected, and how that information is distributed within Canada and beyond our borders. We also urge the Government of Canada to establish more stringent measures of accountability for the CSEC, and to open reporting channels on the work of the agency; to bring decisions regarding internet and phone surveillance before Parliament; and to support the Privacy Commissioner's investigation into the matter, so that the people of Canada can be made fully aware of how their personal information and communications are monitored and used.

Finally, CLA encourages Canadian and international telecommunications companies to safeguard the personal information of their customers, and to limit the collection and sharing of that information to the extent required by Canadian law. We call for a public debate on how to balance the need to fight terrorism with the need to protect the civil liberties and privacy of law-abiding citizens.

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