

Office of the Privacy  
Commissioner of Canada

Information and Privacy  
Commissioner of Ontario

Commission d'accès à  
l'information du Québec

Office of the Information and  
Privacy Commissioner for  
Nova Scotia

Office of the Integrity  
Commissioner for New  
Brunswick

Manitoba Ombudsman

Office of the Information and  
Privacy Commissioner for  
British Columbia.

Office of the Information and  
Privacy Commissioner of  
Prince Edward Island

Office of the Saskatchewan  
Information and Privacy  
Commissioner

Office of the Information and  
Privacy Commissioner of  
Alberta

Office of the Information and  
Privacy Commissioner of  
Newfoundland and Labrador

Office of the Information and  
Privacy Commissioner of the  
Northwest Territories

Yukon Information and  
Privacy Commissioner

Office of the Information and  
Privacy Commissioner of  
Nunavut

November 3, 2017

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada  
c/o Honourable Melanie Mark, Chair  
95 St. Clair Ave. West, Suite 1106  
Toronto, Ontario M4V 1N6

**Sent by email**

**Subject: Privacy education**

Dear Madam Chair and members of the Council of Ministers of Education,

As federal, provincial and territorial privacy protection authorities, we are writing to you about an issue critical to young Canadians growing up in an era of unprecedented technological change with profound impacts on privacy.

As such, we are writing to encourage you to make privacy education a greater priority by including it as a clear and concrete component in digital literacy curricula across the country.

It is important that students become savvy digital citizens who are able to enjoy the benefits of being online. Young people need to be equipped with the knowledge necessary to navigate the online world and participate in the digital domain while protecting their privacy.

The risks associated with connecting to the Internet have grown exponentially in recent years. From cyberbullying, sexting and child luring, to tracking, hacking and email scams, the threats can be daunting for many adults, let alone children and teens. At the same time, personal information has become a hot commodity as businesses seek to monetize our data. It has become difficult to discern who is processing our information and for what purposes and everyone, regardless of age, must weigh the benefits and risks of each product and service they use, each time they use it.

A recent survey for the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada found 92 per cent of Canadians are concerned about the protection of their privacy and nearly half feel as though they've lost control over how organizations collect and use their personal information.

These findings are alarming and can only be addressed if we help younger generations to develop skills that will allow them to navigate the ever complex digital environment safely and responsibly.

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Although many schools across Canada currently teach digital literacy skills, they generally focus on personal safety risks or on acquiring digital skills for the labour market. With the exception of certain one-time initiatives, privacy is not necessarily a part of the courses offered, and many students graduate high school never having learned how to think critically about the information they emit into cyberspace or how to safeguard their digital footprint. This leaves them at unnecessary risk.

As data privacy regulators, we want to draw your attention to this critical issue, which is raising concerns worldwide.

Last fall, participants at the 38<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners adopted the Resolution for the Adoption of an International Competency Framework on Privacy Education. This resolution encourages governments, and especially authorities who are responsible for education and other stakeholders interested in the education sector, to champion the inclusion of privacy education in schools and to advocate for and develop training opportunities for educators in this area. Canadian privacy oversight offices attending the conference signed on to the resolution.

The framework adopted at the conference serves as a roadmap for teachers around the world, outlining nine foundational privacy principles students ought to know and understand. This includes being able to identify what constitutes personal information, being able to understand both the technical and economic aspects of the digital environment, knowing how to limit disclosure of personal information and how to protect oneself online. It states that students should also learn how to exercise their privacy rights and responsibilities as digital citizens.

In order to train young people and give them the tools they need to fully and confidently participate in the digital economy, and in addition to organizing one-time activities (e.g. posters, school tours), Canadian schools must take privacy into account in a more systematic way so that students are sensitized throughout their schooling. We believe part of the solution lies in ensuring digital literacy skills are taught in all schools across Canada, and that privacy education figures clearly within that curricula. Those who learn to protect their privacy, exercise control over their personal information and respect the privacy of others at an early age, will gain tools that will serve them well into adulthood.

In view of the above, federal, provincial and territorial privacy protection authorities strongly urge all those working in the education sector to take steps that will allow future generations of Canadians to develop these digital skills and to succeed in an increasingly data-driven world. To that end, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with appropriate officials from your departments in your respective jurisdictions. Additionally, a delegation representing the signatories below would request to meet with you jointly at an upcoming Council of Ministers of Education meeting.

As privacy advocates keenly interested in ensuring young Canadians grow up with privacy skills and knowledge, we would welcome the opportunity to provide any support you may find helpful.

This is an extremely important issue to our offices and we plan to post this letter on our websites next week as part of our efforts to draw public attention to the importance of privacy education in Canadian schools.

Sincerely,

Daniel Therrien  
Privacy Commissioner of Canada

Brian Beamish  
Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario

M<sup>e</sup> Jean Chartier  
President, Commission d'accès à l'information du Québec

Catherine Tully  
Information and Privacy Commissioner for Nova Scotia

Alexandre Deschênes, Q.C.,  
Integrity Commissioner for New Brunswick

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Jill Clayton  
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Information and Privacy Commissioner of Newfoundland and Labrador

Elaine Keenan-Bengts  
Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories and of Nunavut

Diane McLeod-McKay  
Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner

Enclosures:

[Resolution for the Adoption of an International Competency Framework on Privacy Education](#)

[Personal Data Protection Competency Framework for School Students](#)