

CANADA DIGITAL CHOICE ACT

WHY THIS BILL IS NEEDED

Social media platforms currently own and profit from individuals' data in ways that cause societal harms and risks. Consumers need more control. This Bill aims to empower users, foster innovation and enhance online experiences by expanding data portability and competition.

Current Data Portability Limitations

Some Canadian provinces' data laws require that companies allow users to download personal data, however these laws do not cover content and interactions with other users. This means account holders do not have full control or a complete record of their online activity. Users risk losing access if hacked, banned or want to switch platforms.

Lack of Domestic Competition and Innovation

With data exclusively controlled by existing large social media platforms, it is difficult for new platforms and entrepreneurs to onboard new users (who do not want to lose content history and social networks) and build new online communities.

Potential for Safer, More Enriching Experiences

More competition aims to incentivize social media platforms to focus more on providing safer, age appropriate, and more enriching user experiences, rather than just optimizing for engagement-driven advertising.

WHAT THIS BILL WILL DO

Expands Data Portability

Requires platforms to allow users to download their complete data, including all content, interactions and networks, in a transferable format.

Right to Delete

Requires companies to delete all personal data (including content and interactions) and all inferred data that has been collected about someone at that person's request.

Interoperability

Requires platforms to enable ongoing data sharing - including content and interactions - with other social networks when users grant permission.

WHAT ARE POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Control Over Data Empowers and Protects People

Users will be able to download or share to another platform their complete data—which might include business contacts, personal memories, or a network of relationships—ensuring that the user decides what happens with it and that it cannot be permanently deleted at the discretion of a platform.

Likewise, if an individual no longer trusts a company to hold their personal data, they Bill will ensure it is deleted from that company's servers. Both provisions protect individuals and can provide them greater agency and autonomy.

Data Portability Improves Competition

New social media platforms face barriers to entry because they lack existing users and access to data. By enabling authorized data sharing between platforms, the bill can make it easier for new entrants to onboard new users by enabling them to instantly bring friends or following lists to new platforms.

Individuals will also be provided with the choice of keeping ported data private, or sharing data on interests and interactions with other platforms for users who want to have a more tailored experience. This data access can enable new innovators to compete more effectively with incumbents.

Reshaping Incentives for a Healthier, Safer Internet

The ultimate goal is to shift competition in social media away from simply maximizing engagement and advertising revenue, toward creating healthier and more enriching user experiences.

Platforms will need to compete based on the quality of user experience rather than simply their ability to retain user attention and hold captive users who do not have full control over their data. For example, platforms may compete on providing more age-appropriate experiences, especially for kids, as the bill could enable them to build better content moderation and age-verification systems. It can also open up options for local and more community-specific social media experiences. Consumers should have that choice.