

News Release

August 9, 2011



Joint letter questions why government is avoiding debate on Internet surveillance law

August 9, 2011 – A group of public interest organizations and academics released a joint letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper today, voicing their grave concerns about legislation that would allow for warrantless online spying on Canadians ("Lawful Access" legislation). The letter calls on the government to, at minimum, give the proposed legislation an appropriate hearing instead of rushing it through Parliament.

The letter to the Prime Minister is just the latest in a series of protests about the legislation. The Stop Online Spying Coalition has prompted more than 46,000 Canadians to sign an online petition at <http://www.StopSpying.ca> lambasting the government's anti-privacy initiatives, and earlier this year every federal and provincial Privacy Commissioner signed a [letter](#) to the government criticizing the legislation and questioning the need for bringing in these repressive measures.

"This legislation has never been to committee and MPs haven't heard a single witness on what the government is proposing," says Vincent Gogolek, Executive Director of the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association. "Given the serious concerns expressed by the Privacy Commissioners, burying these proposals in a catchall [crime] OMNIBUS bill is reckless and irresponsible."

"With so many groups and people banded together against this online spying scheme, the government cannot fail to realize just how problematic Lawful Access is," says Tamir Israel, staff lawyer with the Samuelson-Glushko Canadian Internet Policy & Public Interest Clinic. "We hope that Canada's Prime Minister realizes the extent to which citizens are ill-at-ease, and acts to prevent this violation of our civil liberties."

"The government's own supporters are opposed to online spying without oversight," adds Gogolek. He points out that former Conservative Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day was opposed to online spying without warrants, and states, "Why did the government drop its principled position on this? That's another reason we need a full debate on these measures."

The letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper can be found [HERE](#).

-30-

Contact:

Vincent Gogolek, Executive Director, FIPA
Office 604-739-9788 cell 604-318-0031

