



Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada

News Release

Privacy Advocates Express Concern About Child Privacy Online

Regina, June 4, 2008 — As Canadian youth spend more time online, they run the risk of losing control of their personal information and, potentially, facing complications at home, school or work.

Canada's privacy commissioners and ombudspersons issued a joint resolution today expressing their commitment to work together to improve the state of online privacy for children and young people.

"It's time to stop the commercial exploitation of our children. It's high time we came to terms with the impact of the Internet on youth and their lives," says Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner, Gary Dickson.

The resolution was the product of the semi-annual meeting of Canada's privacy commissioners and ombudsmen from federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions across Canada, being held June 4 and 5 in Regina, Saskatchewan.

During the meeting, the commissioners and ombudspersons heard from a panel of young people about their online activities and their attitudes towards, and concerns about, privacy online.

"Young people are very adept and comfortable with electronic communication. As advocates, we have to help young Canadians find the information they need to be their own privacy watchdogs," says Irene Hamilton, Manitoba Ombudsman.

Many of Canada's privacy commissioners and ombudsmen have already proposed tools and learning materials on youth privacy, frequently in cooperation with provincial ministries of education and local school boards.

Beginning today, young people will be able to turn to youthprivacy.ca, an interactive website that offers advice about how youth can protect their personal information and take charge of how their identity is being shaped online.

[Youthprivacy.ca](http://youthprivacy.ca) also features a blog where young Canadians can discuss how technology is affecting their privacy.

"Young Canadians are among the most wired in the world," says the Assistant Privacy Commissioner of Canada, Elizabeth Denham. "They need to understand that all these new technologies can have a significant impact on their privacy, and they need to know what they can do to prevent others from accessing and using this information without permission."

Ms. Denham also announced that the Office of the Privacy Commissioner is launching a contest for youth, ages 12 to 18. The "My Privacy and Me" National Video Competition invites youth to create their own video public service announcements on the issue of privacy. Detailed information about the contest is featured on the new web site.

“The video can be about any aspect of privacy they want to explore—like the ever-growing presence of security cameras, the popularity of social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, Bebo or Xanga, or how their favourite store collects personal information for marketing purposes,” says Assistant Commissioner Denham. “We want to encourage young people to explore the issues around online privacy and empower them to stand up for their right to privacy.”

In coming months, Canadians can expect to see more tools and learning materials designed to help Canadian youth tackle the challenge of managing their personal information and identity in an increasingly dynamic online world.