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Report details pressing privacy challenges facing young people, path to improved protections with BC ‘Children’s Code’

VICTORIA— Today’s youth are the first to grow up immersed in a digital world, and face complex and varied challenges to their personal information and privacy. *The digital dilemma: Reflections on the OIPC Youth Forum*, a new report from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for BC, explores these issues and outlines a path forward for a BC ‘Children’s Code’ to bolster safeguards for young people and their data.

The report draws on conversations and presentations from the online OIPC BC Youth Privacy Forum, held on March 9, 2023.

The forum brought together high school students from across British Columbia, as well as experts from the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), MediaSmarts, and special guest speaker, Cambridge Analytica whistleblower and social researcher Christopher Wylie.

The report spotlights the voices of the young participants who shared their thoughts and personal experiences on the privacy issues that impacted them most.

“We wanted to bring youth into the conversation about their privacy rights, and the many challenges to those rights they face every day. It was a valuable discussion and a conversation my office plans to continue, both to better inform our work in digital spaces, and as we develop a Children’s Code for British Columbia,” said Information and Privacy Commissioner Michael McEvoy.

“We hope that this report provides insights into the issues today’s youth are facing, and the urgent need to address them.”

Highlights of the report include:

- Christopher Wylie in conversation with BC Information and Privacy Commissioner Michael McEvoy and the youth participants on the privacy issues that impact them most, the looming challenges posed by AI, and the need for strengthened protections.
- BCCLA lawyer Mara Selanders’ discussion of youth privacy rights at school, such as what the law says about administrators’ right to search students’ phones.
- MediaSmarts Director of Education Matthew Johnson’s presentation on ethics and privacy online and how students can make good choices when it comes to sharing information – their own and others’ – online.

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The report concludes with a summary of the OIPC's ongoing work to address some of the challenges facing young people through the development of a Children's Code for British Columbia. The proposed code would provide businesses with guidelines on the safeguards they need to have in place when handling young people's personal information. These include putting the best interests of the child first, completing privacy impact assessments of their initiatives, and implementing safeguards around how children's data can be used.

Full report: <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/reports/investigation-and-audit-reports/>

Video summarizing the report: <https://youtu.be/AsS7m9oaZAk>

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