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Bill C-2 Explainer: Surveillance powers and capabilities

| What is Bill C-2?

Bill C-2, know as the "Strong Borders Act", is a wide-ranging proposal that imposes severe limitations on access to refugee claims while expanding surveillance and information-sharing capabilities.

Presented as a response to trade pressures and discredited claims of criminals and drugs flowing across the United States border, the Bill poses a significant threat to privacy rights and cybersecurity, while doing nothing to address Canada's outdated and inadequate framework for privacy protection.

This explainer outlines how Bill C-2's surveillance and information sharing mechanisms will undermine every person's privacy and cybersecurity. Additional resources on Bill C-2's erosion of refugee rights and on its specific privacy implications for refugees and migrants can be found below.

| Law enforcement information demands from a vast range of service providers

Under Part 14 of Bill C-2, police, border officials and security agencies would not require court approval or a strong basis for demanding that health providers, banks, online websites, organizations that serve migrants and refugees, or any other service provider confirm if they have provided services to a person.

Knowing what service providers a person has used can be highly revealing. Law enforcement will be able to confirm at will if an individual has used a political party's donation platform, operates an account with a dating site or mobile app, uses a prayer app, or participates anonymously on a self-harm crisis support forum.

| Increased access to our digital footprints for Canadian & foreign police

All our Internet activities leave behind digital footprints, and the anonymity of these footprints is critical to maintaining privacy in the online world. Under Part 14 of Bill C-2, law enforcement will be able to connect these detailed footprints to us with a court order based on a much lower level of justification than they need today.

Bill C-2 also paves the way for adoption of information-sharing agreements with countries that have used law enforcement mechanisms to persecute diaspora communities. Under these agreements, foreign police in states with poor human rights records could request access to our digital footprints even when investigating conduct that is not criminal in Canada.

| New surveillance capabilities harm privacy & cybersecurity for everyone

Under Part 15 of Bill C-2, the government could order electronic providers including social media sites, instant messaging apps, and mobile device operators to redesign their services for surveillance.

Digital companies could, for example, be compelled to provide direct access to people's phones, laptops or smart TVs. While a court order would still be required to make use of these capabilities, police and security agencies could access our data or live audio and video feeds from our devices.

Surveillance capability regimes of this nature inevitably require creating security vulnerabilities that have in the past been used to compromise entire phone and Internet networks, exposing sensitive government communications, law enforcement target lists and more to foreign spy agencies and other bad actors.

Despite all this, the government could impose these surveillance capabilities in utter secrecy, forbid providers from revealing them to their users, and do so with no real oversight or accountability.

| What can I do?

You can call on your MP to withdraw Bill C-2 using the following tools:

https://action.openmedia.org/page/173242/action/1

https://iclmg.ca/stop-bill-c-2/

https://ccrweb.ca/en/take-action-write-mp-bill-c-2

https://migrantrights.ca/actionslist/stopc2/

https://www.ourcommons.ca/petitions/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-6838

| Learn More

Other information resources: https://ccla.org/privacy/bill-c-2-information-resources/

Canadian Council of Refugees, Bill C-2 Advocacy Messaging Guide, https://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/2025-08/Bill-C2-Key-Concerns_0.pdf

Coalition of Coalitions call for withdrawal of Bill C-2, July 11, 2025, *CCLA*, https://ccla.org/privacy/ccla-joins-calls-for-withdrawal-of-bill-c-2/

Kate Robertson, Unspoken Implications, June 16, 2025, *The Citizen Lab*, https://citizenlab.ca/2025/06/a-preliminary-analysis-of-bill-c-2/

Library of Parliament, Legislative Summary – Preliminary Version, Bill C-2, June 19, 2025, https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/PublicWebsite/Home/ResearchPublications/LegislativeSummaries/PDF/45-1/PV_45-1-C2-E.pdf

Jenna Fung, Bill C-2 FAQ, August 12, 2025, *OpenMedia*, https://openmedia.org/article/item/bill-c-2-faq-explaining-canadas-dangerous-new-surveillance-law

Joe Mullin, Canada's Bill C-2 Opens the Floodgates to US Surveillance, July 25, 2025, *EFF*, https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/07/canadas-bill-c-2-opens-floodgates-us-surveillance

Robert Diab, Bill C-2 Backgrounder: New Search Powers and Their Charter Compliance, (2025) 73(3) *Crim Law Q* forthcoming, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5363319

Recommendations Arising from the Iacobucci and O'Connor Inquiries, June 2009, https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/402/SECU/Reports/RP4004074/securp03/securp03-e.pdf

Canada Must Not Adopt UN Cybercrime Convention, https://openmedia.org/press/item/canada-must-not-adopt-un-cybersecurity-convention

Statement on Bill C-2: Dangerous New Border Legislation Erodes Refugee Rights and will Make Many in Canada Less Safe, https://ccrweb.ca/en/statement-bill-c-2

Open Letter: Canada's Bill C-2 puts Refugee Claimants at Risk, https://ocasi.org/media-release-open-letter-canada%E2%80%99s-bill-c-2-puts-refugee-claimants-risk

Refugee Lawyers Alarmed by Proposed Sweeping Changes in Strong Borders Act, https://carl-acaadr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2025-06-C-2-News-Release.pdf

Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, https://migrantworkersalliance.org/aug17assembly/

Statement: Bill C-2 Risks Undermining Canada's Commitments to Gender-Based Violence Survivors, https://www.schliferclinic.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Statement-Bill-C-2-Risks-_Undermining-Canadas-Commitments.pdf