

Final Report

Crowdsourced Privacy Plan Project

Prepared by: OpenMedia, January 8, 2016

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Overview of the project

OpenMedia undertook *Canada's Privacy Plan* project to engage and inform Canadians about online privacy issues. In recent years, the profile of privacy issues has grown significantly in Canada, particularly given revelations from the Snowden archives that the Canadian government spied on the private information of its own citizens.

Our project aimed to gain a better understanding of Canadians' priorities and expectations when it comes to online privacy. We also wanted to engage with everyday citizens and learn more about how they want to see their privacy protected in an interconnected, digital age.

Participatory policy making is a core value of OpenMedia's, and our ultimate goal with this project was to engage citizens and experts in creating a set of forward-thinking policy recommendations to address the privacy challenges that Canadians indicated matter most to them.

Finally, we aimed to develop a shareable methodology section or toolkit, that other groups or individuals could adapt as a model for how the Internet can be used for participatory policy making.

Description of the activities and results

Phase 1: Development of our Online Crowdsourcing Tool

The first phase of the *Canada's Privacy Plan* project focused on building and publicizing an online crowdsourcing tool, to identify the key privacy priorities of Canadians.

By mid-2014 it was clear that Canada faced a widening privacy deficit. We therefore set out to ensure we could identify solutions to Canada's privacy deficit through crowdsourcing, adapting and building on lessons learned from previous crowdsourcing exercises we had been involved in.

Accordingly, we decided to create a drag-and-drop tool to start our crowdsourcing questionnaire. From previous experience, we learned that the interactive nature of this tool proved popular as a way of engaging people in the subject matter. It also offered a low-barrier way for people to have their say, especially as we enabled participants, if they wished, simply to complete the drag-and-drop tool rather than being required to complete the entire questionnaire.

The drag-and-drop tool enabled participants to rank a series of privacy priorities in order of preference. These priorities, and the content of the subsequent questionnaire, were shaped by input from many people, including experts from the *Protect Our Privacy Coalition* and feedback from OpenMedia community members.

The priorities identified through use of the drag-and-drop tool, and the accompanying questionnaire, directly shaped the overall direction of the *Canada's Privacy Plan* report. For example, "*Require a warrant for govt to spy on personal information*" and "*End blanket surveillance of law-abiding people*" were by some distance the top 2 priorities selected by participants, and both these recommendations played a prominent role throughout the final report.

Finally, we provided participants with an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback, and these often detailed comments helped shape and inform the overall direction of the report, with many comments being published throughout.

Phase 2: Launching and Publicizing of our Online Crowdsourcing Tool

To maximize participation in this project, we ran an extensive publicity campaign around the launch of the tool. This encompassed sustained social media outreach, including share images, along with securing traditional and online media coverage.

We also emailed OpenMedia community members who had previously been involved with our privacy-related activities to encourage them to take part.

We also created a leaderboard so that people could keep track of their progress, the promotion of which was a key component in our overall messaging. With crowdsourcing it is critical that as many people as possible participate. Using online tools in ways that gamify the user experience can be extremely helpful to increasing participation.

We sustained publicity, especially on social media, throughout the eight weeks in which the tool was 'live' and available for people to participate in. High-profile figures including writer Margaret Atwood and journalist Antonia Zerbisias supported us by taking part in the project, and by encouraging others to do so via their social networks.

We also intensified our publicity activities in the run-up to the deadline, with a "last chance" message to ensure that people who had considered using the tool had a chance to do so before the close of the public participation period.

In-person and online events

Although the tool was primarily designed to be used online, we also created an offline version of the first drag-and-drop question for use at in-person events. With the assistance of volunteers, we organized three in-person events - one each in Vancouver, Montreal, and Halifax.

OpenMedia led two educational events on privacy issues at the B.C. Civil Liberties Association annual event for 16-17 year old high school students. Our privacy campaigner David Christopher delivered an interactive presentation outlining the key privacy challenges facing Canadians today. Following Q&As, we followed up with a pen-and-paper exercise that enabled all the participants to take part in our privacy crowdsourcing initiative.

We also hosted a Facebook Town Hall as part of our crowdsourcing work. Tom Henheffer, executive director of our coalition partner at Canadian Journalists for Free Expression co-hosted the event with OpenMedia's Steve Anderson (founder and Executive Director). We had a lively discussion, as Steve and Tom fielded questions from Canadians on privacy issues. The NDP's digital issues critic Charmaine Borg also joined the debate. We reached over 46,000 people with this event, and input from this Town Hall helped shape this report.

Access My Info tool

We worked with privacy experts at the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab and Digital Stewardship Initiative to offer Canadians a new way to learn more about the information being collected about them by their telecom provider. A new online tool simplifies the process of requesting information from telecom providers about the information they collect, and about their disclosure of personal information to third parties.

The *Access My Info* tool creates a formal letter which, under Canadian privacy law, telecom companies are legally obliged to respond to within 30 days. The launch received solid media coverage. Over 5000 Canadians have used the tool. We also surveyed users of the tool about the responses they received from telecom providers, and input from this survey helped shape the recommendations of this report.

Phase 3: Analyzing the results and writing the Privacy Plan

The next phase of this project focused on analyzing the results of our crowdsourcing exercises, along with writing and publishing the Privacy Plan.

The data collection period spanned from October 22, 2014 to November 30, 2014 after which the results were analyzed. In total, 10,107 Canadians from every province and territory used our crowdsourcing tool to provide specific input for the report, which we added to feedback from the over 125,000 Canadians involved in our wider privacy work.

We conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results of our crowdsourcing activities and citizen engagement events, with the aim of identifying the key privacy concerns of Canadians.

We then liaised with a range of leading academic experts for advice on how to best address the key themes identified through our crowdsourcing work. We worked with these experts, and with the range of organizations involved in the *Protect Our Privacy Coalition* to craft policy recommendations and solutions for the privacy concerns identified by Canadians.

Finally, we brought together this expert input, and organized it around the key themes. For each theme we drafted an analysis, accompanied by a shortlist of bullet-point recommendations reflecting how best to address Canadians' key privacy concerns. Ultimately, *Canada's Privacy Plan* made 24 specific policy recommendations, grouped under the three high-level recommendations identified by crowdsourcing participants: *Get a Warrant*, *End Mass Surveillance*, and *Embrace Accountability*.

We also included a detailed section about the methodology we employed with particular emphasis on making it sharable for international organizations in a way they can learn and adapt it to their needs.

List of publications and deliverables

- *Canada's Privacy Plan* - [website version](#)
- *Canada's Privacy Plan* - [PDF version](#)
- *Canada's Privacy Plan* - [Executive Summary & Key Recommendations \(PDF version\)](#)
- *French-language* - [Synthèse et Trois recommandations clés](#)
- *VIDEO Canada's Privacy Plan* - [launch video](#)

Evaluation on the impact of the project

In our team's evaluation, *Canada's Privacy Plan* has made a positive impact on what is an ongoing and lively debate in Canada about how to ensure our privacy rights are safeguarded in a political climate where there is growing pressure to undermine privacy in the name of security.

We embarked on this project because privacy, a fundamental human right, is under threat. There is a very real danger that the Internet, the greatest tool for connectivity that humankind has ever invented, will be turned into a tool that enables government to spy on the private lives of all of us.

At OpenMedia we work to place citizens at the heart of decision-making, and ensure that participatory values are at the heart of everything we do. Accordingly, we're particularly pleased that a broad range of Canadians from every province and territory helped contribute to and shape our report, often offering detailed open-ended feedback.

At the outset of this project, we also set out a number of high-level goals by which we could evaluate our success. Here are specific examples of impact for each of these goals:

- *To engage Canadian citizens and experts in creating forward thinking policy recommendations that will address a range of online privacy issues.*
 - 10,107 Canadians used our crowdsourcing tool to provide specific input for the report, which we combined with feedback from the over 125,000 Canadians who have been involved in our wider privacy work.
 - We consulted a number of leading Canadian policy experts who provided in-depth feedback, comments, and suggestions to strengthen the rigour and quality of this report. We are especially thankful to Laurence Kearley, Tom Henheffer, Tamir Israel, and Christopher Parsons for their invaluable advice.

- We also hosted or helped organize a series of lively online and in-person events to engage Canadians in this project. Further details are contained in Chapter 4 of the final report.
- *To gain a better understanding of Canadians' priorities and expectations when it comes to online privacy.*
 - Through our crowdsourcing drag-and-drop tool, the accompanying questionnaire, open-ended feedback, and feedback provided through in-person and online events, we gained a much better understanding of Canadians' priorities when it comes to privacy.
 - For example, it was clear from this feedback that the issues of requiring a warrant for government surveillance, and putting a stop to mass surveillance, were head-and-shoulders above other privacy priorities. Accordingly, we devoted a substantial portion of the final report to tackling these issues
- *To analyze the results for an expected (minimum) 10,000 individuals who use the online crowdsourcing tool to develop a Privacy plan.*
 - A detailed analysis of the results from the 10,107 Canadians who used our crowdsourcing tool is set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
 - We also included in Appendix 1 a sample of the open-ended feedback we received both from individual participants, and from key organizations working in the field.
- *To develop a sharable methodology section or toolkit we hope can be used as a model for how the Internet can be used for participatory, policy making.*
 - We included an extensive methodology section as part of the report, an online copy of which is available at <https://privacyplan.ca/conclusion/methodology>
 - Key takeaways are highlighted under the *Sharing learnings and methodology* heading below.
- *To develop policy recommendations that would be used to open dialogue with decision makers and all political parties during the Canadian, federal elections in 2015.*
 - We succeeded in developing a set of 24 forward-thinking policy [recommendations](#), under 3 high-level headings, to address the privacy priorities identified by Canadians.
 - We also hand-delivered *Canada's Privacy Plan* to key Canadian decision-makers:
 - Prior to the federal election, our Executive Director Steve Anderson met with Justin Trudeau, the leader of Canada's Liberal Party and soon-to-be Prime Minister. Anderson handed Mr Trudeau a copy of the report. Many leading figures in Canada's technology sector also attended this meeting. With the new Liberal government in place, we are now requesting a further meeting to encourage them to implement the report's findings.

- Prior to the federal election, our Digital Rights Specialist, Laura Tribe also met with the team of Olivia Chow, a key figure in the opposition New Democratic Party, to deliver the report and discuss its findings.
- Our Campaigns Director Josh Tabish met with Claire Martin of Canada's Green Party in June 2015 to deliver the report and discuss its findings. The Green Party endorsed the Key Recommendations of *Canada's Privacy Plan* in full and promised to implement them if elected.
- Our Digital Rights Specialist Laura Tribe met with Canada's Privacy Commissioner, Daniel Therrien, and his Director of Policy and Research Barbara Bucknell, to hand-deliver the report and discuss its findings. Commissioner Therrien and his staff had already reviewed the digital version of the report.

On the whole, it's clear both from the crowdsourcing work we carried out for this project, and from independent studies, that Canadians are deeply unhappy with online spying and ongoing privacy breaches.

With a new government in place, and with privacy issues, such as Bill C-51, having played a prominent role during the recent election, we see real potential to finally start to fix Canada's privacy deficit. We will continue to work with Canadians and decision-makers from across the political spectrum to implement the Key Recommendations of *Canada's Privacy Plan*.

How we got the word out about the project

We developed a comprehensive communications strategy for the public launch of *Canada's Privacy Plan*, including extensive social media work, blogs, and a series of op-eds:

- We produced a high-quality online [video](#) in the style of a public service announcement to publicize the report's key recommendations.
- We published a [series](#) of op-eds in the popular Canadian online publication *The Tyee*:
 - [Part 1](#): Let's turn the privacy debate on its head
 - [Part 2](#): Canadians to spy agencies: get a warrant!
 - [Part 3](#): How Canada can end mass surveillance
 - [Part 4](#): Eyes on the Spies: Canadians deserve accountability
- We published a [blog](#) summarizing the key findings of our project on the Internet Society's website
- We hosted a Social Media Town Hall to discuss the key recommendations of the report.
- We published the report online at PrivacyPlan.ca

- We secured endorsements for the report’s key recommendations from a diverse range of organizations, including: Canadian Access and Privacy Association, Canadian Constitution Foundation, Canadian Institute of Access and Privacy Professionals, Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, Free Dominion, Greenpeace, Leadnow.ca, National Firearms Association, Ontario Civil Liberties Association, PEN Canada, Pink Triangle Press, Public Service Alliance of Canada B.C. Region, Privacy and Access Council of Canada, and the Samuelson-Glushko Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic.
- The report was [covered in detail](#) by CBC News, which quoted the federal Privacy Commissioner as welcoming the initiative.

Sharing learnings and methodology

Although this project was both topic- and country-specific (“Privacy in Canada”), we believe our methods could quite straightforwardly be adapted for other topics and settings.

A full treatment of our methodology is set out as part of the final report (online copy available [here](#)). Here is a summary of key lessons learned:

- **Design of the questionnaire:**
 - The interactive nature of the drag-and-drop tool proved popular as a way of engaging people in the subject matter. It provided people a low-barrier way to have their say.
 - It was useful to split the questionnaire, so that people if they wished could simply submit their responses to the drag-and-drop tool, without being required to answer the more detailed questions. Again, this enabled people to participate in a low-barrier way, while also enabling participants who wished to make a more substantive contribution to do so.
 - On the whole, we kept the questions accessible and high-level. However we also wanted to give participants the opportunity to weigh in on specific potential reforms, such as those proposed by the federal Privacy Commissioner. For this reason, as participants worked through the crowdsourcing questionnaire, the questions became progressively more detailed and specific, although we strove to ensure that all questions were accessible and understandable for the general public.
 - Finally, we provided participants with an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. 562 participants (or 5.6% of the total) did so. Again these often detailed comments helped shape and inform the overall direction of the report, and many of them are published throughout.

- **Development of the Online Tool:**

- The tool was developed by OpenMedia's in-house web development team. Our team built the tool largely using Drupal 7, with some additional development work required to ensure the drag-and-drop tool functioned as intended.
- A number of technical challenges had to be overcome, notably in ensuring that the order in which each drag-and-drop option appeared was randomized for each user. This was crucial to ensuring the results were reliable.
- To incentivize sharing of the tool, we created a system whereby each user who completed the tool was assigned a unique URL which they were encouraged to share on social media.
- We also created a leaderboard to publicize which users had succeeded in encouraging the most new participants — we know from experience that 'gamified' elements like this can really help engage the public. With crowdsourcing it is critical that as many people as possible participate. Using online tools in ways that gamify the user experience can be extremely helpful to increasing participation.
- Finally, we worked to ensure the tool would be usable by participants on a range of devices, including tablets and smartphones. A separate version of the drag-and-drop tool was built for mobile device users, with a pull-down menu replicating the drag-and-drop functionality. The tool was also able to detect whether a participant was using a mobile device, and to serve up the correct device-specific version automatically. The tool was tested extensively on a range of devices prior to launch.

- **Launching and publicizing the questionnaire:**

- We ran an extensive publicity campaign around the launch of the questionnaire, including emails to our community, a pre-planned social media campaign on multiple channels, alongside media outreach.
- We offered modest prize packages to incentivize spreading the word about the tool. These prizes were designed to appeal to people interested in privacy, for example by including a year's subscription to the Canadian VPN service Tunnelbear.
- We reached out to high-profile figures such as Margaret Atwood and Antonia Zerbisias to encourage them to take part and spread the word. Atwood alone reached over 1 million people on Twitter.
- Although the tool was primarily designed to be used online, we also created an offline version of the first drag-and-drop question for use at in-person events. With the assistance of volunteers, we organized three in-person events in Vancouver, Montreal, and Halifax.

- **Adaptation for a Regional or International target audience**
 - While this project's scope was specific to Canada, it should be relatively straightforward to pitch a similarly designed project at a smaller (regional) or larger (international) audience.
 - We would recommend creating multilingual versions of the tool for international projects where a significant percentage of the target audience does not speak English. Due to resource constraints, we were unable to create a French-language version of the tool, which dampened response rates from Québec.
 - Our tool was pitched at Canadians, a country of 35 million people. For projects with a smaller target audience we recommend placing an even higher priority on publicity activities to ensure a critical mass of participants.

Conclusion and gratitude

On behalf of the entire OpenMedia team, we are sincerely grateful to the Internet Society for helping to make this project possible. *Canada's Privacy Plan* marks a significant milestone, not just for OpenMedia's privacy activities, but for the broader work of countless organizations, individuals, and experts working to ensure every Canadian can use the Internet without fear of being watched.

Now that we have the firm foundation of *Canada's Privacy Plan* under our belt, we'll be continuing our work to safeguard online privacy with renewed energy and inspiration.

On behalf of all of us — thanks Internet Society!

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