

*Private Members' Business*

Information travels everywhere and can now be vacuumed up automatically. It is no longer necessary to hand someone a computer tape to trade information. We can simply configure a computer system to make the required links.

When we address the protection of personal privacy we want to talk about the use of personal information in the broadest possible ways. The rules we come up with should address every sector of the economy, not just the direct marketing industry. Personal information is a vital commodity in just about every business from banking to telecommunications to health care.

We need necessary rules for all sectors tailored to meet the special needs of each one. Instead of working on the bill we should support the work that has been going on for several years at the Canadian Standards Association or the CSA. A consensus committee passed a model of privacy code in September of this year, the result of three years of work in the committee with representation of industry, consumers and federal and provincial governments.

The concept behind this model code is that each sector of business industry would take this set of fair information practices and apply it to its own information holdings. They would be accountable for what they did with personal information but they would have some input into the process.

The Standards Council of Canada will soon publish this code of fair information practices as a national standard for Canada. This is a first among developed countries that have addressed the issue of data protection. It is the first time that protection of personal information has been looked at in the context of standards. In this information age that is a very useful way of looking at the matter.

The CSA privacy code has the support of a broad range of private sector organizations, including the Canadian Direct Marketing Association. On October 3 the president of the Canadian Direct Marketing Association called on the Minister of Industry to produce legislation in the House that would use the CSA standards as the basis for legislation federally. He suggested that the federal government encourage the provinces of Canada to do the same in their own jurisdictions.

Much of the information that Canadians are most concerned about is information over which provinces have direct control. For instance, medical and educational records are provincial matters. The privacy commissioner of Ontario released a letter to the Minister of Health last week wherein he expressed deep concern regarding the provisions of the omnibus Bill 26 now before the Ontario legislature. That bill would permit the opening of private medical records and release officials from liability for their disclosure.

As the commissioner pointed out in his letter, 92 per cent of Canadians are expressing concern about the misuse of their personal information. It is of great concern to them. Unfortunately it is not all protected by law. We in the federal government must do our part to protect consumers' personal information, but we must also start a much broader discussion with the provinces about the issue. Only Quebec, as my colleague from the Bloc has pointed out, has moved to protect personal information held in the private sector.

Canadians deserve and want more protection for their personal information than is offered in the bill. I understand the issue is being studied by the departments of industry and justice with a view to developing solutions that will work for the protection of personal information in all sectors of the economy across the country.

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It is a huge and complex issue because the increasing availability and use of personal information and consumer files to target service delivery affect virtually every sector of our economy. Protection of personal privacy is identified as one of the foundations vital to the network world into which we are moving.

The Minister of Industry established the Information Highway Advisory Council to advise him on how to make the most of new possibilities brought to us by the communications network. It focused on the issue and Industry Canada has produced a number of studies. The council consulted experts and produced the following recommendations on privacy.

The federal government should act to ensure privacy protection on the information highway. This protection shall embody all principles of fair information practices contained in the Canadian Standards Association draft "Model Code for the Protection of Personal Information". To this end the federal government should continue to participate in the development and implementation of effective national voluntary standards based upon this model code.

The federal government must take leadership in the implementation of these principles through the following actions.

In co-operation with other levels of government that share responsibility for various sectors of activity on the information highway, it should establish a federal-provincial-territorial working group to implement the privacy principles in all jurisdictions.

It should create a level playing field for the protection of personal information on the information highway by developing and implementing a flexible legislative framework for both public and private sectors. Legislation would require sectors or organizations to meet the standard of the CSA model code while