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Censorship bill?s impact

by JAY GOLDBERG

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is taking Canada on a headfirst dive toward government censorship, with the Senate the only obstacle standing between Canadians and the vast ocean of government control.

As Trudeau's censorship law makes its way to the Senate, the stakes are high.

Calling Bill C-11 a censorship bill is not hyperbole.

?Bill C-11 would give the CRTC the power to set conditions demoting or applying warning labels to content it considers contrary to Broadcasting Act objectives, which are so broad as to cover a wide range of lawful content,? wrote Dr. Michael Geist, of the University of Ottawa, who has warned that Bill C-11 would see government bureaucrats ?force-feed? Canadian content.

Bill C-11 would hand the CRTC, a government agency, the power to control what Canadians read and watch online by filtering our news and streaming feeds on apps like Netflix and TikTok.

For now, the government says bureaucrats would only use their new censorship powers to promote Canadian content, thereby burying non-Canadian content.

But Bill C-11 gives the government the tools to filter online content on any basis, not just whether something counts as ?Canadian.? The Trudeau government is asking us to trust that bureaucrats won't use the full power handed to them. At least for now. That's like asking us to trust a gambling addict at a casino.

Bill C-11 might seem abstract, but Canadians need to pay attention.

There are a few ways that this legislation, if signed into law, could impact Canadians almost immediately.

Do you like to watch shows or films on Netflix on date night?

It turns out Bill C-11 will make some Canadian content harder, not easier, to find because the CRTC uses a very outdated means of deciding what counts as Canadian. Rather than focusing on content, the CRTC focuses on things like the production process.

Because of the outdated rules, Bill C-11 would make it harder for viewers to watch content that should be considered Canadian but isn't, such as the series based on Canadian author Margaret Atwood's Handmaid's Tale. Under the same outdated rules, non-Canadian content could become easier to see. A biopic of former U.S. President Donald Trump, called ?Gotta Love Trump,? is currently considered Canadian.

Do you like to watch content streamed from other parts of the world? Bill C-11 could very well impact your ability to watch your favourite show from India or South Korea because Bill C-11 would force foreign content providers to follow all kinds of new rules and regulations in order to enter the Canadian market.

Some providers may just block the Canadian market altogether instead of following cumbersome rules. Hulu, for example, has already blocked the Canadian market. That's why you haven't been able to keep up with the Kardashians lately.

Are you a small-time Canadian content creator? Do you have a YouTube channel that has original Canadian content?

Bill C-11 could hurt your ability to attract viewers from outside Canada.

The CRTC would force YouTube to promote your channel to people who aren't even interested in your particular content simply because it counts as ?Canadian.? This could lead to lower click rates, which YouTube would take as a sign that the content isn't a winner with viewers. YouTube would then deprioritize your content in markets outside of Canada.

?Creators are going to wake up and find the kind of content that has previously been successful in an unregulated YouTube is no longer successful in a regulated YouTube,? warned famed Canadian YouTuber J.J. McCullough.

Canadian creators could be in for a world of hurt.

The bottom line is that Bill C-11 is terrible news for Canadians, creators and consumers alike.

If you don't want the government messing with your streaming feeds, your ability to watch content from abroad or promote your Canadian content outside Canada, you have a stake in this fight.

It's time to tell Trudeau to scrap his online censorship bill.

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