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Feds promise changes to Bill C-10 following uproar

Written By **Sam Odrowski**

The federal government is promising an amendment to Bill C-10 following an uproar of controversy and criticism over the legislation's potential to infringe on Canadian's freedom of expression.

The criticism stemmed from the removal of an amendment to the bill last week that protected user generated content from being regulated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) on social media platforms.

Without the protection, former CRTC vice-chair, Peter Menzies called Bill C-10 an ?assault? on Canadian's ability to post their opinion online. Part of the legislation states user generated content can be flagged by the CRTC, which forces Canadians to remove their post or video within 24 hours, effectively subjecting all online speech to government review, without any clear mandate.

On Monday (May 3), Dufferin?Caledon MP Kyle Seeback brought forward his concerns about the bill and asked heritage minister Steve Guilbeault, who introduced the bill, if he would re-protect user content, during Question Period. In Guilbeault's response, he compared Seeback to the ?most radicalelements of the Conservative Party? and didn't indicate if protections would be put back in place.

However, later that day, in a statement to Global News, Guilbeault said the federal government is bringing forward an amendment that will make it ?crystal clear? that users generated content won't be regulated under Bill C-10, but there were no details on the amendments specifics or when it will be brought forward.

Following this development, Seeback told the Citizen he isn't confident of Guilbeault's sudden change in position.

?The minister called me a conservative radical for raising this issue and now he's suggesting he's going to do something. I don't believe him. I don't believe that he's going to put in adequate protections for Canadians,? Seeback noted.

Seeback started a petition last week asking the Government of Canada to immediately withdraw or repeal Bill C-10, and respect Canadians ?freedom of expression, our right to equal access of content online, and the flourishing of a free and open Internet.?

The petition has since received enough support to be officially accepted to the House of Commons portal for online petitions.

Seeback noted that there are already laws in place against hate speech and the incitement of violence, so a bill regulating speech does nothing but provide the feds with overreaching powers to regulate what's posted online.

?There's lots on the internet that I don't want to see and none of us should see, but the danger is when the government starts to determine what can be put there and what can't be put there. It is just far too open for partisan abuse and a government should not have that power to infringe on Canadians fundamental freedoms,? said Seeback.

He told the Citizen that if Bill C-10 doesn't get rectified to protect user content, there could be Charter of Rights and Freedom challenges over the legality of the legislation.

Guilbeault says the intention of Bill C-10 is to get some accountability from websites like Netflix and YouTube to get them to contribute to Canadian content promotion and set aside additional funding to support the development of Canadian content.

This would mean compelling Netflix, YouTube, and other web giants to behavesimilarly to Canadian distributors of Broadcast content such as Rogers, Shaw and Bell, who are required to broadcast a certain amount of Canadian content and pay into the Canadian Media Fund (CMF) with a portion of their revenues each year.

Seeback noted that Bill C-10 has the potential to make web giants pay their fair share, but too many regulations are being left to the CTRC to be determined, without a proper discussion in the House of Common.

Going forward, he told the Citizen he'll keep the pressure on the feds until an amendment does come forward to protect what Canadians post online.

?We're going to keep fighting it the way we are, raising it in Question Period, demanding answers from the minister,? said Seeback.

?I'd absolutely love to hear from constituents, what their views on this are? feel free to get in touch with me in my office. I'd be happy to chat.?

Seeback's office can be contacted at (519) 941-1832 or by emailingKyle.Seeback@parl.gc.ca.

Following repeated attempts, the Citizen was unable to reach the heritage minister's office for comment.