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Export date: Fri Oct 30 4:45:57 2026 / +0000 GMT

Statistics Canada Wants Canadians? Personal Banking Information

by David Tilson

The protection of the personal information of Canadians should always be a top priority for any level of government, including the federal government. Unfortunately, recent events have left many Canadians doubting the current Liberal government's commitment to protecting their privacy, after it was discovered that Statistics Canada is asking banks across the country for financial transaction data and personal information of 500,000 Canadians without their knowledge to develop a ?new institutional personal information bank.? This raises many alarming questions about why Statistics Canada isn't being transparent with Canadians and why the current government is being completely complacent and not protecting Canadians' privacy.

Canadians have become aware that the personal banking and financial transactions being requested by Statistics Canada include: bill payments, cash withdrawals from ATMs, credit card payments, electronic money transfers, and even account balances. This request for personal banking information by the agency has triggered a formal investigation by the Privacy Commissioner, Daniel Therrien. Canadians' personal financial information belongs to them and they have the right to know when it is being accessed and for what purpose. The current Liberal government's proposed Personal Information Bank represents a disturbing and unprecedented intrusion into the private lives of individual Canadians. Now, the government is demanding that banks and credit card companies hand over Canadians' detailed financial information without their consent.

Scott Smith, a privacy expert with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, warned businesses are concerned that the requirement to hand over consumer data to the federal statistics agency will highlight the differences between Canadian privacy laws and a tough new law in Europe ? and put trade at risk.

Protecting the personal information of Canadians is an integral role of government. Sadly, the current Liberal government doesn't share this commitment and instead is choosing to turn a blind eye to this invasion of Canadians' privacy and is not telling Statistics Canada to immediately cease and desist. Furthermore, they call any questioning of this invasion of privacy ?fearmongering? and have stated that, ?Conservatives had better get on board.? However, it's difficult to get on board when this government has violated the privacy of Canadians hundreds of thousands of times in the last 19 months alone.

Canada's Conservatives are calling on Justin Trudeau and the current Liberal government to make sure this proposal doesn't proceed forward. The privacy of Canadians' personal financial data must be protected. It's time for this government to do the right thing and tell Statistics Canada to stand down.