

# Important to protect privacy as government seeks to combat crime in the digital era

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Professor Ron Deibert addresses the audience at an International Privacy Day symposium. Credit: Jon Horvatin

Fighting cybercrime and infringing on personal privacy need not go hand-in-hand, University of Toronto professor Ron Deibert told the audience at a recent symposium to discuss the implications of proposed federal lawful access legislation.

Deibert, head of the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab and the Canada Centre for Global Security Studies at the Munk School of Global Affairs, was a speaker at the event, held by the Ontario Information and Privacy Commission to celebrate International Privacy Day. His work in the field of cyber security and human rights is well known. Together with his team at the Citizen Lab he has documented a troubling increase in the number of countries that filter access to information and censor

the Internet, watching it grow from a mere handful in the early 2000s to more than 45 today.

“It is true that issues of cybercrime present major problems. Nearly every day there are new revelations of high-level breaches of government ministries and agencies,” Deibert, a professor of political science, told the audience assembled in Toronto’s MaRS auditorium. “However, I believe these challenges are not insurmountable and do not require radical infringements on privacy.”

After a number of unsuccessful attempts over the past decade, the federal government plans to re-introduce lawful access legislation, arguing that it is crucial to combat crime in the digital era. The proposed laws (Bills C-50, C-51 and C-52), for instance, would require Internet service providers to collect, process, and archive data relating to each and every person in Canada and turn it over to law enforcement without first obtaining a warrant. The [legislation](#) will drastically alter the state of privacy and telecommunications in Canada and, as a result, has garnered widespread criticism from the [privacy](#) community, opposition parties and leading academics.

When it comes to lawful access, Deibert said the government has yet been able to justify legislating new surveillance powers over the Internet. He asserted that the government need not sidestep civil liberties to meet the challenges of cybercrime. Instead, what it needs is “a new investigatory paradigm.”

“We need to give law enforcement agencies new resources and new equipment to sort through voluminous flows of data and we need to give their officers training in navigating through the complex underbelly of Internet communications,” he said. “But alongside those resources, Canada should maintain the highest possible standards of judicial oversight and public accountability.”

Provided by University of Toronto

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