

Walking a digital tightrope

The delicate balancing act between preserving Canadians' privacy and ensuring that police can fight crime is again in the news.

Police are lobbying for more power to access cell-phones containing material believed to be pertinent to an investigation.

A Toronto Star/CBC poll suggests Canadians are on side with that position with a big caveat.

As long as police obtain a warrant, more than 70 per cent of Canadians approve of giving them greater powers to investigate digital devices, according to the poll. Without the warrant, support is just 49 per cent.

Police will find that support heartening, because as things stand, they seem to be fighting a losing battle against existing laws and increasingly-sophisticated personal firewalls.

Now, if a police officer requests your cellphone password or encryption key, there is no law requiring you to comply.

In a case being investigated by the RCMP, a child alleges sexual assault by a parent who recorded the abuse on his iPhone. Police are unable to access the alleged video.

In a situation like this, it's hard to imagine too many Canadians having a problem with investigators getting into that phone. Yet, the poll shows about 19 per cent of respondents believe digital users have the right to complete privacy, regardless of circumstances.

Some fear that should suspects hand over cellphones, they in effect are incriminating themselves.

It's a very radical proposal in Canadian law, Micheal Vonn, executive director of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, told the Star/CBC. It changes the basic nature of how we go about achieving the ends of criminal investigation, by compelling the person who is under investigation to participate in the investigation.

That may be true, but a police search warrant allows officers to comb a house for clues to a crime. So what is the difference?

Balancing privacy rights with the needs of law enforcement is a tricky business. In the end we must ask ourselves, do we really want to restrict police from accessing data that could potentially save someone from harm or take a predator off the streets?

Are we okay with allowing criminals to escape justice because they had the foresight to shield their data with the latest software?

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Letters to the editor

Ban needed on insecticides

The federal government has proposed the phase out of insecticides, which is a huge step to a better and greener tomorrow. Insecticides have a direct effect on the bee population in Canada, which has proved detrimental to our greenery.

Neonicotinoids, a type of insecticide that targets the central nervous system of bees, has caused many bees to die because of paralysis.

Even though the phase out of the insecticides is an environmental breakthrough, there is still lots more to do for the dying bees.

Statistics show that between the years of 2014 and 2016, the population of bees had dropped to an all-time low. This is because of the neonicotinoid treatment of corn and soybeans.

The deaths of these tiny creatures have resulted in many flowers not being pollinated, causing the plants to weaken and die.

Also, not many plants are sprouting because there are no bees to carry the seeds.

If this continues, bees will go extinct and there won't be anymore more food for us humans to eat.

But it's not over; we can still help the bees by doing the following: planting more flowers, not using pesticides and educating the youth.

One main thing would be planting more bee-friendly flowers; this will help with the bees' pollination process. Now having phased out insecticides, we can move to phase out pesticides as well.

These pesticides also do a number on bees, leaving many bees dead. Lastly, the youth should be able to learn more about bees and what they do.

The youth shouldn't think that bees attack and sting people while on the contrary, bees are more afraid of us than we are of them.

Bees play an important part in our ecosystem and therefore we must protect them.

Samia Akhtar

905 residents being picked on

Alarmed, however not surprised that Toronto left wing mayor has shown himself to be a self-serving socialist.

Going directly against his pre-election promises, Tory now proposes tolls on the Gardner and Don Valley expressways.

This is in line with Toronto's historical policy of paying for services with other people's money.

Toronto property taxes are well below that of the surrounding 905 communities and is the sole reason that Toronto is in such dire financial straits (even worse than Brampton).

It is interesting that Toronto proposes implementing taxes on a highway system that they never paid for in the first place.

I have no doubt that fellow socialist Kathleen Wynne, will support this initiative in her continued quest to destroy Ontario.

Gord Gibbons