

Changing Times

It was October 8th, 1993 when Peter Mansbridge announced the advent of the Internet on the CBC. It was a revolutionary method of communication that allowed fifteen million people around the world to communicate simply by typing keys. This new method of communication was void of all aspects of human expression; no visual or verbal cues, only words on a screen. Participation in the Internet grew at an astounding pace and has since revolutionized how the world communicates at both a social and economic level.

Interaction on the Internet was unregulated at the time and individuals felt a certain anonymity, a certain freedom to freely express themselves without the constraints that face-to-face interaction imposed. Today, the means of interaction has grown exponentially; *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *YouTube* are only a few of the many means of communication.

As with other innovations in our lives and often because of tragic incidents, governments are eventually moved to develop regulations in attempt to control these means of communication. On Monday, March 9th, 2015 Bill C-13, "Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act" became law. How this Bill and other regulations regarding the Internet impact our lives is difficult to determine or predict, but a general understanding is important.

There are several clauses that specifically can impact school divisions. This Act adjusts Canada's Criminal Code to create a new offence that prohibits any individual from distributing, publishing intimate images of another individual without that individual's consent. The Act defines what is considered an intimate image and defines the specific penalties and fines if convicted.

The Act also provides law enforcement officers broader abilities to search and seize electronic devices. These broader provisions are more relevant to private individuals and not to School Divisions. However, the Act does provide law enforcement officers the authority to make a "preservation demand" which can impose conditions on a division to keep computer data if requested and relevant to an offence. A School Division must comply with the "preservation order".

The complete statute may be found under the following link: [Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act \(SC 2014, c. 31\) http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2014_31/](http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2014_31/)

It is difficult to understand the extent to which the Internet has revolutionized our lives. As a community in Beautiful Plains School Division, we have new and additional responsibilities to teach, monitor and protect our children from online pressures, bullying or abuse. Vigilance and consistent monitoring are the best defense. It is a responsibility that our grandparents never imagined but now a reality for families and communities around the world.