



Bill C-34, the Safe Social Media Act

On this page:

- [About Bill C-34, the Safe Social Media Act](#)
 - [Part 1: Digital Safety Act](#)
 - [Part 2: Digital Safety Commission of Canada Act](#)
- [Engagement and consultations](#)
- [Related links](#)

Online services shape how people in Canada communicate, access information, and participate in civic and cultural life. While these services offer significant benefits, they also expose users—particularly children and youth—to growing risks.

Studies show that these risks are real, measurable, and increasing:

- Youth who experience online victimization are significantly more likely to report poor mental health outcomes, including suicidal ideation.
- One in four youth aged 12–17 have reported experiencing cyberbullying.
- Police-reported incidents of online child sexual abuse and exploitation have increased significantly in recent years, reflecting both rising prevalence and evolving digital risks.
- New technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), are changing how harmful content is created, amplified, and experienced online.

Online harms are not only the result of individual behaviour. They are also shaped by how digital services are designed and operated. Features such as algorithmic recommendation systems, engagement-based feeds, autoplay, and endless scrolling can amplify harmful content and increase exposure, particularly for young users.

The rapid development of AI has introduced additional challenges to the online environment. AI chatbots can interact directly and persistently with users, sometimes reinforcing harmful behaviours or providing unsafe responses in sensitive situations.

Voluntary action by digital services has not kept pace with the scale, speed, and severity of online harms. Canadians increasingly expect stronger public oversight of major online services, particularly where children and youth are concerned.

On June 10, 2026, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-34, the Safe Social Media Act, which would enact two new Acts: The Digital Safety Act and the Digital Safety Commission of Canada Act. The bill introduces a framework to improve online safety, ensures that digital services are transparent and accountable for the risks their services create, and creates a new Digital Safety Commission of Canada to enforce the Digital Safety Act and support victims of online harms.

About Bill C-34, the Safe Social Media Act

Part 1: Digital Safety Act

The Digital Safety Act would establish new safety requirements for social media services and AI chatbot services. The Act requires these services to identify risks of harm on their platforms, adopt measures to address certain risks, implement safety-focused and age-appropriate design features, make user guidelines available, provide tools such as blocking and flagging, and submit publicly disclosed digital safety plans.

Harmful Content

The Act specifically targets seven types of harmful content:

- Intimate content communicated without consent
- Content that sexually victimizes a child or revictimizes a survivor
- Content that induces a child to harm themselves
- Content used to bully a child
- Content that foments hatred
- Content that incites violence
- Terrorism or violent extremism content

Duties

Under the Act, regulated services, including social media services and AI chatbot services, are subject to the core Duty to Protect Children. This duty requires regulated services to implement design features to make their services safer for children.

Social media services, including livestreaming and user-uploaded adult content services, will have two additional duties:

- A Duty to Make Certain Content Inaccessible, specifically: (1) content that sexually victimizes a child or revictimizes a survivor; and (2) intimate content communicated without consent including deepfake sexual images.
- A Duty to Act Responsibly, by mitigating the risk that users will be exposed to harmful content, applying labels to synthetically generated content, and providing clear and accessible ways to flag harmful content and block other users.

AI chatbot services will also be subject to a Duty to Act Responsibly, tailored to chatbot services, which will require them to: (1) mitigate the risk of the chatbot communicating harmful content; (2) implement emergency measures in crisis situations; and (3) mitigate the risk that the chatbot will engage in harmful behaviour.

Additionally, all regulated services are required to publish transparency reports, called Digital Safety Plans, on how they have met their obligations under the Act.

Minimum Age Requirement

Regulated services will be required to implement age-appropriate protections and safeguards for younger users. This can include minimum age restrictions for accounts. For social media services, the government intends to implement a 16-year-old minimum age requirement for having accounts. The Commission may grant an exemption to a social media service if they have established and maintained sufficient safeguards for children on their platform.

Part 2: Digital Safety Commission of Canada Act

The Digital Safety Commission of Canada Act establishes a new Digital Safety Commission of Canada to administer the framework and to help foster a culture of online safety in Canada.

The Digital Safety Commission will:

- Set new standards for online safety by conducting research on global best practices, assessing regulated services' Digital Safety Plans, providing guidance to services on how to mitigate risk, and developing educational resources for the public.
- Enforce legislative and regulatory obligations and hold regulated services accountable for their responsibilities through reporting, auditing for compliance, issuing compliance orders, and penalizing services that fail to comply.
- Collect, triage and administer complaints from users about content that falls within the Duty to Make Certain Content Inaccessible when complaint responses from the social media service are insufficient.

While technology rapidly changes, it is important that the regulator has specialized knowledge and expertise in technical subject matter. Creating a Digital Safety Commission is the best method for ensuring that technical expertise is ready and available to respond to emerging challenges, issue regulations, monitor compliance, and respond to user complaints.

Details of certain obligations under the Safe Social Media Act will be outlined in regulations made by the Digital Safety Commission. This will allow the Commission to adjust these obligations in response to emerging risks online and to technological changes. The Commission will be able to use regulations to outline:

- Age estimation and age verification measures
- Age-appropriate design features under the Duty to Protect Children

- Design features under the Duty to Act Responsibly, like blocking, flagging, and labelling tools
- Guidelines to services on information that must be provided in the Digital Safety Plan
- Information on bringing complaints forward to the Commission

The Digital Safety Commission will oversee how regulated services implement the obligations in the Act and work towards creating safe online spaces for users.

Bill C-34 is an essential step forward in ensuring the safety and well-being of Canadians on digital services.

Engagement and consultations

The Act is informed by previous and ongoing federal policy work and consultations on online harms, including engagement with victims and survivors, civil society organizations, Indigenous partners, experts, industry, and Canadians. This includes the recent reconvening of the Expert Advisory Group on Online Safety (March to May 2026) to provide advice on new and emerging issues, as well as targeted engagement with industry and other stakeholders. Previous consultations, including public consultations, expert workshops, roundtables, and Citizens' Assemblies focused on democratic expression and protecting youth online, have also informed the proposed approach.

Summaries of the 2026 Expert Advisory Group sessions will be available soon.

Related links

- [Government of Canada introduces legislation to make social media services and AI chatbots safer for children](#)
- [Bill C-34, the Safe Social Media Act](#)
- [Child sexual exploitation on the Internet](#)
- [Online child sexual exploitation – Key resources](#)

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