

# THE CONNECTED CARE FOR CANADIANS ACT (BILL C-72)



## OVERVIEW

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Introduced by the Honourable Mark Holland, federal Minister of Health on June 6, 2024, [The Connected Care for Canadians Act \(Bill C-72\)](#) is currently under second reading in the House of Commons. This legislation aims to transform the Canadian healthcare system by establishing secure digital access to health data for patients and providers and by enforcing common interoperability standards that ensure seamless data exchange across healthcare platforms.

## BILL C-72: OBJECTIVES

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Bill C-72 aims to revolutionize healthcare delivery in Canada by providing patients and healthcare providers with secure, streamlined access to health information. This will enhance clinical decision-making, ultimately reducing unnecessary procedures and hospitalizations.

Bill C-72 is currently being proposed due to the federal government's emphasis on the urgent need for timely and secure access to personal health information, given its critical role in improving healthcare outcomes and saving lives. Delayed access to such information leads to unnecessary tests, prolonged hospital stays, and medication errors.

Canada's healthcare system also faces significant challenges due to fragmented health information management, resulting in barriers and delays for patients and healthcare providers in accessing essential care data. This lack of interoperability exacerbates broader issues in healthcare delivery, including a sizable portion of people without primary care providers, lengthy wait times for necessary surgeries, and widespread concerns about access to quality medical treatment when needed.

## SCOPE OF IMPACT

- **Health Information Technology (HIT):** Defined in Bill C-72 as any hardware, software, and related upgrades designed for creating, accessing, or exchanging electronic health information.
- **Electronic Health Information and Personal Health Information:** These terms refer to data concerning or collected during any "health service" provided to an individual. The Bill does not provide a definition for "health service," leaving its interpretation open-ended.
- **Health Information Technology Vendors:** Defined in Bill C-72 as any individual, corporation, joint venture, partnership, or organization or association that licenses, sells, or supplies health information technology as a service.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTHCARE CAN MEMBERS

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Based on the legislative framework outlined in the Bill, HealthCareCAN has identified some preliminary considerations for our members.

### ENHANCING PATIENT AND PROVIDER ACCESS

The primary goal of this legislation is to improve access to data for both patients and healthcare providers, ultimately aiming to enhance the quality of care. By facilitating easier access to comprehensive health information, Bill C-72 seeks to empower patients in managing their health and enable providers to deliver more informed and efficient care.

### DATA INTEROPERABILITY AND SECURITY

A key component of Bill C-72 is the focus on data interoperability. Health information technology vendors will be required to ensure that their systems are fully interoperable, allowing for seamless and secure access, use, and exchange of electronic health information across different platforms. This interoperability is expected to improve coordination of care and reduce redundancy in data collection.

The shift toward greater data sharing mandated by Bill C-72 brings significant responsibilities regarding data security and privacy. Vendors and providers must implement stringent measures to protect patient data, ensuring continuous monitoring and adherence to ethical standards. This enhanced regulatory compliance, including interoperability standards, robust data security measures, and strict privacy protocols, is challenging but critical for maintaining public trust. Such rigorous compliance ensures that electronic health information can be securely exchanged and integrated across platforms, safeguarding patient data while facilitating improved healthcare delivery.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Bill C-72 may potentially impact the research community by facilitating access to a larger, more diverse pool of health data. This standardized access may not only enhance the quality and scope of health research but also may enhance cross-institutional collaborations. Researchers may expect reduced barriers to multi-site studies, and quicker testing with more readily available data. Importantly, Bill C-72 may also support the development of real-time analytics and precision medicine by providing researchers with access to detailed, up-to-date patient datasets. These provisions also enable researchers to involve patients more actively in studies, using patient-reported outcomes to enhance the relevance and impact of their work.

## FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

With the introduction of Bill C-72, organizations may wish to consider the legal requirements imposed when entering or renewing contracts for health information technology. The necessity for systems to be interoperable and compliant with new data-sharing standards will likely require modifications to existing contracts. Organizations should also prepare for future legal and financial implications of these changes, including the costs associated with upgrading systems and ensuring compliance. Proactively adjusting contracts and planning for these transitions are essential steps to mitigate risks and align with the new legislative framework.

***The applicability of Bill C-72 varies across Canadian jurisdictions, as it will only be enforced in provinces or territories where local laws are deemed not substantially similar to the Bill C-72's standards.*** This selective application method is similar to that used in Canada's federal privacy law, Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), reflecting a tailored approach to federal legislation implementation.

## CONNECTION TO THE PAN-CANADIAN INTEROPERABILITY ROADMAP

The federal government notes that the legislation is intended to speed up the adoption of interoperability standards developed through Canada Health Infoway's [Shared Pan-Canadian Interoperability Roadmap](#). This roadmap aims to standardize health data sharing across provinces and territories, ensuring a cohesive national approach to health information technology.

## NEXT STEPS

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Given the limited details available at this stage, monitoring Bill C-72 as it progresses through Parliament will be crucial for HealthCareCAN and our members, several of which have expressed opinion and interest on the proposed legislation, including Dr. Carolyn Steele Gray of HealthCareCAN member institution Sinai Health in a [recent \*Globe and Mail\* op-ed](#). Understanding the potential impacts as more details are made available will enable member organizations to prepare for the changes ahead and contribute to shaping a more connected and efficient healthcare system in Canada. HealthCareCAN will continue to follow the progress of the bill and provide members with updates, as appropriate.

HealthCareCAN remains attentive to our members. If your organization has any questions or feedback in connection with these developments, we encourage you to contact us.

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