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**BILL c-51: What it is and controversy behind it**



**What is Bill C-51?**

According to the Government of Canada, Bill C-51, also known as the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015, was designed to, “encourage and facilitate information sharing between Government of Canada institutions in order to protect Canada against activities that undermine the security of Canada.”

The Conservative Party introduced the idea of increasing security provisions after the Parliament Hill shooting in October, but didn’t formally introduce the act until January.

Simply put, the Stephen Harper government wants to allocate more power to police services and security institutions like the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) to keep a closer eye on potentially dangerous terrorism situations and prevent future attacks.

**Why does the Harper government insist we need it?**

According to the act’s official summary, Bill C-51 would ensure safer transportation services for Canadians, allow law enforcement to step in and arrest, without question, a person they suspect is about to carry out a terrorist attack, and it would increase the protection of witnesses who come forward with information on a potential terrorist attack.

Essentially, the government would increase its role in national security to keep a constant watchful eye on potentially harmful situations and end them before anyone is hurt or killed.

**Why is it so controversial?**

Civil liberty groups and other critics have claimed the bill stretches the definition of security to potentially include peaceful protests, further restricts freedom of expression, and raises privacy concerns, since the act would allow federal institutions such as Health Canada and Revenue Canada to share private information with the RCMP.

Critics have also expressed grave concerns that it fails to define terrorism clearly, and in attempting to remove all terrorist propaganda from the Internet will effectively try to censor freedom of expression on the Internet, violating a handful of online civil liberties.

**Where is Bill C-51 at?**

Bill C-51 was formally introduced on Jan. 30, and since then has been rapidly pushed through Parliament.

On Feb. 23, the bill was passed and read a second time before being referred to the Standing Committee.

Critics have argued that the Harper government is pushing the bill through the Senate as fast as it can so it can make it law without leaving much room for debate. The government has denied these allegations, claiming that the faster the bill gets passed, the faster government and law enforcement services can start to take action on protecting the country from further terrorist attacks.