

April 1, 2019

Facebook Now Agrees with BCJ's Position, Wants to be Regulated

The Broadcasting Commission (BCJ) notes with interest the call last week from Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg for Facebook itself to be regulated.

The BCJ has argued that as social media is now by far the largest distributor of both real and fake news in the world, it will be impossible to protect society from criminals and violent extremists until the social media companies are given the same obligations as every other media company. They must ensure that the material they carry is legal, which means that child abuse, hate speech and violence would then be driven out of the public spaces on the internet. After the horrific social media massacre in New Zealand, where 50 people were killed, Prime Minister Jacinta Ardern said that social media platforms needed to take responsibility for what they carried, and that 'they are the publisher, not just the postman'.

The BCJ has argued that recent events make it necessary to regulate social media on essentially the same basis and principles as broadcast media, with specific additional guarantees of freedom of expression and protection for personal data.

Chairman of the BCJ, Professor Anthony Clayton, said that the new proposals from Facebook are similar to those from the Broadcasting Commission, including the BCJ's recommendation that content should now be regulated in a dedicated, specialized and technology-agnostic manner across platforms and devices. Professor Clayton also disclosed that the BCJ has already been in dialogue with technology companies WhatsApp and YouTube regarding measures that could be put in place to protect users from malicious content and to prevent the abuse of their personal information.

"The giant social media companies and most governments have been caught off guard by the sheer scale of the problems in the online space. Initially, the big technology companies were slow to respond and reluctant to deal with these problems. They are now frantically developing the algorithms and fact-

checking capacity to deal with the torrent of output, and have made significant progress, but they cannot keep up with the volume and have not yet found a solution to the complexity of the challenge,” Professor Clayton said.

“The Cambridge Analytica scandal, the live broadcast of the mass murder in Christchurch and other deeply problematic incidents have made it clear that some form of independent regulation is necessary,” Professor Clayton continued.

Executive Director of the BCJ, Attorney-at-Law, Cordel Green noted that harmful content on social media could be regulated while safeguarding the vital principle of free expression.

“Broadcast content has been regulated in Jamaica for decades with great weight being placed on freedom of expression. This is borne out by Jamaica's high ranking on the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index. However, we have been resolute that where content is harmful, the vulnerable, particularly children, must be protected,” he said.

“Since 2017 the BCJ has been a global thought leader on regulation in the digital age, working through organisations such as the International Institute of Communications (IIC) and the International Regulators’ Forum (IRF),” Mr. Green added.

Broadcasting Commission Collaborates with Google & Other Online Platforms

In early 2018, the Broadcasting Commission intensified discussions with technology giants Facebook and Google on the problem of harmful content online.

“Coming out of those discussions, the Broadcasting Commission has recently agreed to be a **YouTube “Trusted Flagger”** for Google’s YouTube platform,” Mr. Green said.

The **YouTube Trusted Flagger** program currently involves a small group of select organisations around the world who are trusted to flag problematic content on YouTube. As one of those entities, the BCJ can now receive complaints from Jamaicans about problematic content on YouTube and alert Google with a view

to having harmful material addressed. Jamaicans can submit complaints to the Commission via email at youtubeflagger@broadcom.org

“Get Safe Online Jamaica” Website Launched

The Broadcasting Commission has also partnered with Get Safe Online, the UK’s leading source of unbiased, factual and easy-to-understand information on online safety, to launch a Jamaican resource, getsafeonline.org.jm, dedicated to helping citizens and businesses keep themselves, their families, devices and workplaces safe on the internet with free, impartial, expert, practical advice.

The website, which was launched today, April 1, 2019, includes comprehensive online safety advice and information on the latest online safety risks such as bullying, stalking, trolling, romance fraud and safeguarding privacy. It includes a range of short videos and tips for parents. Over the next 12 months the Broadcasting Commission will be working with Get Safe Online to better customize the content for Jamaicans.

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Contact: Don Dobson, 929 1998, ddobson@broadcom.org