

Canada's cyber security at risk: Think-tank

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Canada has fallen short in protecting its critical infrastructure from a whole host of risks, says a new report published by public policy think-tank Macdonald-Laurier Institute.

Report author and Queen's University professor Andrew Graham says computer hacking traced back to China shows Canada's cyber-security needs, especially, are "mushrooming."

"I think this is truly cause for us to conceive of a cyber war," said Graham.

He points to how banking systems, transportation corridors, power plants, and oil pipelines increasingly depend on remote-controlled sensors and computers vulnerable to hacking.

Some action has already taken place on the issue through Public Safety Canada's cyber-security strategy.

Meanwhile, Colin Robertson of the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, another think-tank, expects to see a new North American perimeter security agreement take things further.

"One of the core areas of discussion is cyber security," said Robertson.

Graham's report also points to the need to protect infrastructure from internal threats, such as "environmental terrorists."

"When you start to look at those pipelines and you start to look at the hydro distribution, the relative capacity to take down those (systems) doesn't take a lot of work," says Graham.

He also points to the need for the federal government to co-ordinate the effort to maintain critical infrastructure and ensure adequate front-line policing.