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Professional Writers Welcome Debate on C-32 Draft Copyright Amendment

The Professional Writers Association of Canada (PWAC) reports from their Annual General meeting in Toronto that they welcome another opportunity to strike a balance in our copyright law. The draft bill tabled this week in Ottawa, Bill C-32, moves towards harmony with the global framework set out in treaties of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) that Canada signed in 1996 but has yet to implement. PWAC acknowledges the federal government attempt to align our laws in order to strengthen the legal tools required to give and retain value for copyright materials in the global digital marketplace.

But there are errors in the structure proposed in the draft bill. “This summer’s promised debate and discussion are essential to striking a more appropriate balance between accessibility and value than is present in the draft,” said PWAC Executive Director **Sandy Crawley** when reached at MagNet, the annual pan-industry conference of magazine publishers, editors and writers. “We need to determine whether the dismantling of fundamental structures that make Canadian writing and publishing worth pursuing, as proposed in C-32 as drafted, is unwitting or intentional.”

PWAC President **Tanya Gulliver** noted that the current political landscape offers an opportunity to ensure that the issues are thoroughly debated and more widely understood by MPs and their constituents. “We will be working with our partners in the writing and publishing industry to make sure that all parties understand what is at stake for Canada’s creative economy if the draft Fair Dealing exceptions move forward.” C-32 as written contains a blanket exception for education that is particularly troubling to the writers group. Gulliver added that PWAC does support the proposed five-year automatic review of the legislation as a sensible mechanism in this time of rapid change in communications technology and usage.

The organization agrees with the Canadian Publishers Council’s statement as reported in *Quill & Quire* that every exception to copyright results in reduced incentive to invest in the publishing process, reduced innovation, reduced author royalties, reduced employment, and reduced output of cultural expression.

PWAC, established in 1976, is the national organization representing over 600 freelance writers and journalists in Canada.

More information:

Sandy Crawley, Executive Director
Tanya Gulliver, President

scrawley@pwac.ca
tanyagulliver@gmail.com

(416) 504-1645
(504) 292-0683