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PWAC Objects to Court Pressure on Writer

The Professional Writers Association of Canada joins with Canada's other free press advocates in supporting Toronto writer and editor Derek Finkle in his fight to maintain journalistic integrity in the face of extreme pressure from the courts.

Mr. Finkle, the best-selling author of *No Claim to Mercy*, a book about the Robert Baltovich murder case, has been court-ordered to turn over his research notes and other materials relating to the book. These events follow closely the cases of two other Canadian writers, Julieta O'Neill and Bill Dunphy, both of whom were pressured to release confidential information.

"In our view," says PWAC President Suzanne Boles, "prosecutors are attempting to use a writer's good and professional work to build their case, and that is not how a free society expects their justice system to act. The principle of source confidentiality must be respected and protected, or our free press unravels."

The Baltovich case is going to retrial after the Ontario Court of Appeal overturned an original conviction. Mr. Finkle has expressed his intention to fight the court order and to protect the confidentiality of his research work and sources. Such action by the courts places a ridiculously heavy cost burden on an individual writer, and is unnecessary where prosecutorial due diligence is performed.

"A writer working within an established principle of a separate and free press," adds Executive Director John Degen, "is being forced to choose between respecting the courts and protecting his very career. As a society, we should refuse to subject our journalists to such unfair pressure."

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

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protecting the rights and careers of freelance writers