

Thursday, May-13-21

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage:

Re: Clause 4.1(1) of Bill C10

The library is the most democratic institution our society! I was raised by a single mother with five children; one with a severe developmental challenge. Needless to say, we knew poverty very well. I was excluded from many activities like organized supports and recreation clubs but I could always use the library. Park in front of a library and watch who enters and exits; children and adults of all genders, nations, classes and abilities. Again, the library is the most democratic institution in our society!

When my grandmother got me a library card it opened my mind to a world of possibilities beyond my immediate circumstances. This was a springboard to a life-long passion for learning which culminated in my receiving a Ph.D. and becoming a professor. Academic freedom is the cornerstone of the Academy. This includes not only the production of knowledge, regardless of how unpopular but also its dissemination. The library plays a key role in the dissemination of knowledge and critical thought which is crucial to a "conscious civilization" according to J.R. Saul.

Print and broadcast media are increasingly becoming suspect by a large proportion of our society; whether for political purposes, conspiracy theories or secretive marketing purposes. The library continues to operate largely immune to these influences; no one accuses the librarian of ulterior motives. The library remains an impartial collector and distributor of knowledge in its many forms including social media.

It is for these reasons (accessibility, opportunity and impartiality) that I look to the library as a crucial player in the maintenance of intellectual freedom and open communication. That is why I take it seriously when I hear the concerns of the British Columbia Library Trustee Association (BCLTA) This organization is dedicated to: representing trustees across the province, supporting trustees to engage with board development and representing trustees to the provincial government and other organizations.

The BCLTA has encouraged the reinstatement of clause 4.1(1) of Bill C10 which calls for an exemption of end-user content from regulation by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). The BCLTA expressed its concerns in the following motion:

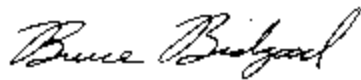
Motion that BCLTA Board send a letter to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (CC all BC MPs) :

- The BCLTA board of trustees has concerns regarding the exclusion of clause 4.1(1) from Bill C-10.
- BCLTA board endorses freedom of expression as a core principal of Canadian librarianship.
- The BCLTA board strongly encourages the reinstatement of clause 4.1 (1).

I support the BCLTA motion and strongly encourage the House of Commons Heritage Committee to consider reinstating clause 4.1(1) of Bill C10. I believe that the regulation of the CRTC should not be expanded to end-user platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. During these times of broad scepticism regarding main-stream media and the citizens' increasing reliance upon social media for information during the pandemic, the individual's right to produce and distribute information through social media, albeit flawed, is an essential strategy to promote freedom of speech among our population.

Please reinstate clause 4.1(1) of Bill C10 which I believe is consistent with our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce Bidgood".

Bruce A. Bidgood, Ph. D.
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