

**Title of Resolution:** Resolution on CanWest and Free Speech

**Rationale / Purpose for Resolution:**

CanWest is suing local activist Mordecai Briemberg over a parody of the Vancouver Sun, even though Briemberg had nothing to do with creating the parody. Due to CanWest's dominance over Canadian media, this has had a chilling effect on people's right to criticize the media and speak freely on contentious issues.

**Prior History of this Resolution (IF ANY):**

BCLA passed resolutions on media democracy in 2003 and 2007, and has a standing commitment to intellectual freedom.

**Action Proposed:**

Whereas BCLA passed resolutions opposing media concentration and supporting Media Democracy Day in both 2003 and 2007;

And Whereas CanWest is the largest media conglomerate in Canada and owns The Vancouver Sun, The Vancouver Province, The Vancouver Courier, The Victoria Times-Colonist, The National Post, Global Television and many specialty channels and community newspapers;

And Whereas the greater the concentration of media ownership, the narrower the range of opinions presented through those media;

And Whereas the 2007 BCLA resolution on "Libraries and Media Concentration" stated that "freedom of the press and public access to diverse media and information are prerequisite to a functioning democracy" and affirmed that "libraries are the primary social institution with responsibility to assure the broadest possible availability of a wide range of ideas and information";

And Whereas CanWest has served Mordecai Briemberg and six other Jane and John Does with a writ of summons charging them with producing a four-page parody of The Vancouver Sun;

And Whereas it is clear this writ is directed mainly at Briemberg's opposition to the continuing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel and is intended as a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation;

And Whereas political satire and parody both constitute important elements of intellectual freedom, and so play an important role in provoking democratic debate and free thought;

And Whereas CanWest has a pattern of launching Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation and taking other actions to undermine and curtail critical voices;

Be It Resolved that BCLA write an open letter to Canwest calling on them to drop the aforementioned legal suit;

And Be It Further Resolved that BCLA broadly distribute this letter in the library, media activist, and civil liberties communities as well as seek publication in Canwest and other media;

And Be It Resolved that BCLA support the 2008 Media Democracy Day and encourage libraries throughout the province to hold events;

And Be It Resolved that the BCLA work with the Information Policy Committee to develop a series of educational tools, possibly including a travelling workshop, to educate the BCLA membership and the general community on the impact of media concentration.

**BCLA Committees / Interest Groups Consulted (IF ANY):**

This resolution was produced collaboratively by members of the Information Policy Committee.

**Endorsement by BCLA Committees / Interest Groups (IF ANY):**

This resolution is endorsed by the Information Policy Committee.

**Fiscal Implications (IF ANY):**

There could be costs associated with any educational tools that BCLA chooses to produce.

**If this resolution necessitates a change in existing policy, state the policy and the change:**

N/A

**If this resolution establishes policy, state the policy:**

N/A

**If this resolution conflicts with existing policy, state provisions for resolving the conflict:**

N/A

**If this resolution proposes a BCLA position statement, indicate the position's relations to libraries and library service:**

This is an issue of intellectual freedom, which is a core library value. Also, libraries are the primary social institution with responsibility to assure the broadest possible availability of a wide range of ideas and information; CanWest's actions fall under that responsibility.

**Initiating Individual, Committee or Interest Group:**

Information Policy Committee

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