

Dear Sirs:

I understand you are accepting comment from ordinary Canadians re the proposed amendments to the Copyright Act. Accordingly I will share with you some of my thoughts in this area.

Generally speaking, I feel that the copyright protections should not be extended in length in any instance. They may perhaps be extended in breadth to prevent clear violations through the newer media outlets (i.e. the Internet, cell phones, etc.). By length I refer, for example, to the "life plus 50" copyright that presently holds for written works. Personally I feel this should be reduced to something like "life plus 25", with some sort of grandfathering clause for existing works. My view is that the vast majority of written work has a very limited shelf life. Most authors make almost nothing from their writing, but when they do it is almost always within 25 years of initial publication. After they die they don't get anything; only their estates can benefit. A 25 year extension for the estate is more than fair. After that let it pass into the public domain, and if any publisher can make profit thereafter then good on them. The estate may feel aggrieved but they didn't do much to earn this revenue and, again, it's unlikely to amount to much.

In areas like film I feel the current copyright terms are quite ridiculous. Their shelf life is usually much shorter than written work, and in those few cases where a work has continued interest, then (say) a 10 year term (from first release) to generate revenue seems more than generous. In other words, if the public has been paying through the nose to watch a film for some 10 years, then after that it should be free to all. Anyone who can find a way to make money from its distribution or showing after that should be free to do so. This could very well stimulate our economy and lower our costs for TV and cable. You may feel that 10 years is too short. Fair enough. But there must be a limit. The present situation in the United States for, say, the early Disney films is beyond my comprehension.

In areas of music I feel only a very limited copyright should apply. In our digital age, just about every new song or piece of music can be converted to a finite digital file (of high fidelity), and once broadcast by radio, TV or Internet can be captured by anyone with but a little knowledge. You can't stop this. It's like trying to hold back the water after the dam has burst. Musicians should earn their money by performing. At best, the first point of entry could be taxed, or a tariff assessed, for a limited period of say a year or two. After that let it be free. If it's been bouncing around the electronic highways for a few years it is effectively free anyway. Of course, once it was different, and we had to pay for good recordings of popular music. Now it is too easy to capture music digitally and then distribute it. The music industry weasels may wish it were otherwise, but I will not mourn their loss of revenue or diminished influence.

Thank you for your time,

Gordon Taylor