



Canada: Blowback Against Prime Minister Trudeau's Proposal to Require News Websites to Obtain Government Licenses

Canadian Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault said that he planned to follow a panel report recommending that Canada's broadcasting laws for radio and television should require government licenses for all media content including online media, news sites, and social-media companies. After an uproar on the internet, both Trudeau and his minister began to waffle on their statements, but Trudeau remained firm that news sources must be "credible" and "trustworthy". [Who will decide what is "credible and trustworthy? Trudeau and his comrades, of course.] -GEG

It's one of the fastest reversals of government policy that I've ever seen.

On Sunday, the Trudeau Liberals were promising to bring in a licensing regime for news outlets and podcasters, by Monday they were singing the praises of a free press.

It all started last week when a panel struck by Justin Trudeau himself to examine the future of media in Canada released their final report.

Called "Canada's Communications Future: A Time to Act," the report called for new media to be required to register with the government and be licensed. On Sunday, Trudeau's culture minister told CTV's Question Period that he agreed with that idea.

"Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we believe in a strong, free and independent press," Trudeau said when questioned by Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer.

Well, let's be honest, a "strong, free and independent press," isn't one that has to register with the government and obtain a licence. To do that would be to give the government control over what media outlets could say, print or broadcast.

That's bad for democracy and a complete violation of the ideal of freedom of speech.

Thankfully, Trudeau went a step further in saying he will not go forward with this idea.

"I want to be unequivocal, we will not impose licensing requirements on news organizations, nor will we regulate news content," Trudeau said.

The only troubling part of Trudeau's response is that he said his government's priority is to ensure that Canadians have access to, "diverse, high-quality and credible news." Who decides what is "high-quality" or "credible" when it comes to news?

I hope it's not Justin Trudeau or any other politician. Politicians are the biggest purveyors of "fake news." They're the people who try to spin everything.

It was just about one year ago, Feb. 7, 2019, that I stood in a commuter parking lot north of Toronto as Trudeau reacted to the first story on SNC-Lavalin and lied to the world.

"The allegations in the *Globe* story are false," Trudeau said.

Of course, we would come to learn that the allegations were true and then some. Yet, for weeks, the government's line was that the media outlet was lying.

If we lived in a licensed system, would the *Globe* see their licence revoked for publishing something the government claimed was a lie? Would they have even published it in the first place or held back out of fear of irritating the authorities?

And make no mistake, the report tabled last week called for registration and licensing of media outlets more than once.

In recommendation 56, the report calls for online media to be registered by the CRTC, meaning any news outlet, any podcaster, any content creator – a recipe blog – could be registered by the government.

“This would require a person carrying on a media content undertaking by means of the Internet to register unless otherwise exempt,” the report states.

And at recommendation 74, the report called for the CRTC to be given the power to, “impose codes of conduct, including provisions with respect to resolution mechanisms, transparency, privacy, and accessibility regarding all media content undertakings.”

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