

One Canadian Writer's Brief
to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology
regarding the statutory review of the Copyright Act

April 27, 2018

Dear Committee Members:

I am a Canadian historian and novelist, who most often writes about Atlantic Canada.

Over the past several years, ever since changes were made to the Copyright Act that allowed Canadian universities to take content from books, articles and poems written by Canadian writers to create their own university course-packs and photocopied handouts—without any compensation to the creators of that content—author incomes have plummeted. Previously, payments from Access Copyright were a significant source of income for many authors, me included. They no longer are. The Writers' Union of Canada can provide you with the statistics.

I would like to see the wording of the Copyright Act changed so that there is no longer any opening for universities (or others) to use the work of any author without compensating that author via payments to Access Copyright for any works that are copied. This is the situation with music, art and photography—and so it should be for writers as well. If a given author wishes to donate his work for free, that is wonderful, but that donation should not be assumed or taken for granted.

Canada needs to support its creators in all aspects. We all want to build a strong and flexible creative economy. One step toward that goal is to tighten the Copyright Act so that Canada's writers are always compensated when their creative output is copied and/or distributed by any technology. There are many who are currently profiting from the distribution of authors' works, but it is all too often not the authors.

Sincerely,

A. J. B. Johnston, Historian and Novelist
Halifax, Nova Scotia