

Executive Director's Report

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Collaboration creates results

Whoever said summer was a quiet time didn't work at CBA. Since BookExpo Canada finished it's been non-stop at your Association. Here are some of the issues we are working on:

Stop Sticking It To Us

CBA is a member of a coalition of close to 20 Associations, representing over 120,000 Canadian businesses, the majority of them small and mid-size enterprises, who have banded together to encourage federal political leaders to address the more than \$3.5 billion in hidden credit card fees Canadians pay each year by incorporating the issue into their consumer protection agendas. The Coalition is calling on credit card companies for a moratorium on new fees, additional fee increases and the introduction of new premium cards as government considers its options on the issue. Led by Retail Council of Canada, this Coalition includes a liquor control board, petroleum marketers, grocers, restaurants, jewellers, hotels, booksellers and others who are affected by rising credit card fees. Charities and government agencies will also be affected by these fees, which are among the highest in the world, averaging \$2 on every \$100 transaction. Compare that to a small business in Australia, who is charged 45 cents on the same \$100 transaction, or in the UK where they pay 79 cents—these countries and a host of others regulate credit card fees. Weekly meetings and updates on the progress of the Coalition ensures that CBA members are well represented on this issue. There is also a strong indication that Interac is endeavouring to have debit rates changed from a flat per transaction fee to a percentage of the sale, just like credit cards. The Coalition is lobbying the government to stop this from taking place. All members should visit the StopStickingItToUs.ca website, complete the petitions, write your MPs, tell your local merchants and get them to follow suit. This is a huge issue and will impact your bottom line. Government officials consider silence as acceptance—we cannot remain silent!

Copyright Reform

In 1999, after months of meetings, changes to the Parallel Importation Regulations occurred. The *Copyright Act* makes parallel importation, in most cases, an infringement of copyright, allowing publishers to establish exclusive distributors to market their goods. The Book Importation Regulations set minimum standards of service for delivery times and maximum limits on the price that can be charged for imported books. Last year's pricing disparity caused many in the industry to take another look at the regulations to determine if they were still appropriate for the new digital age. Bill C61 was introduced, but died on the floor when the election was called; however, we believe copyright reform will remain a hot issue once the government returns to Ottawa. The Regulations state that the price of books must not be greater than the list price of the book in its country of origin, plus the current exchange rate, and plus 10 per cent of the price after conversion for books imported from the United States and 15 per cent for books imported from elsewhere. Campus Stores Canada (CSC) has actively campaigned for the legislation to be changed to remove the 10-15 per cent fees. CBA has published a paper which outlines the issue and offers a perspective for and against parallel importation. We have surveyed members to determine where they stand on this issue. On October 31 a book industry meeting will be held to discuss the issue. CBA will report back to members following the meeting.

Ontario Funding for Elementary School Libraries

CBA was fully involved in the discussions with the Ontario Ministry of Education prior to an announcement by the Ontario Liberal government that a tendering process would be put in place for elementary public school libraries to purchase books. The process involved an extensive Request for Proposal (RFQ) to be completed by booksellers and others interested in providing books to Ontario public school libraries. For those who worked through the 50+ pages of documents, plus the dozens of amendments and clarifications, it was an onerous task. CBA provided support for member booksellers, from alerting them to new notices from MERX, to bringing booksellers together to discuss the proposal's requirements. While this process was only set up in Ontario, it is possible that other provinces could opt for the same system to ensure that funds are being appropriately spent and accounted for. In each of these areas CBA has collaborated with other organizations to bring focus to an issue, add a bigger voice, gain more media and government attention, and in the end offer greater support for its own members. Just like CBA Independents' Day, where we work to raise awareness of the importance of independent bookstores to local communities and Canada, the more members who get involved, the more we will be noticed and the more we can effect change!