

Study: Canada’s policy on foreign control in the book industry is ineffective

MONTREAL, QUEBEC—(June 6, 2018)—On the occasion of its 2018 Annual General Meeting, today the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP) released *Net Benefit: Canada’s Policy on Foreign Investment in the Book Industry*. This longitudinal study commissioned by the association’s membership in 2017, was sparked by renewed public discussion in 2017 around the sale of McClelland and Stewart to Random House. Cultural policy consultant Roy MacSkimming examines the implementation of the *Revised Foreign Investment Policy in Book Publishing and Distribution (1992)* by successive governments over the past 25 years. His report shows broad disparities and inconsistencies in the policy’s implementation.

The goal of the policy is to strengthen Canada’s book publishing and distribution sector, by requiring foreign investment to be of net benefit to Canada and the Canadian-controlled book sector. Along with support for independent Canadian publishers, the policy is fundamental to developing and maintaining a vibrant domestic publishing industry. However, as the report explains, numerous exceptions to the policy granted by government have meant that the policy has fallen short of its stated objectives. By examining thirteen cases of foreign takeovers in the industry from 1992 to 2017, MacSkimming reaches the “unavoidable conclusion that the policy has been effective in achieving its objectives only rarely.”

Despite this outcome the policy is still relevant. MacSkimming says: “[The] policy as it stands remains based on valid principles and objectives of cultural sovereignty that Canadians still care deeply about.” Even though the policy has rarely been enforced, the report notes it can be adapted to the changing publishing landscape and should be used “... in effective ways to benefit Canada and the Canadian-controlled sector of the industry.” The report concludes that the policy “contains sound and practical options for strengthening Canadian-owned publishing [but they] have seldom if ever been tried.”

“Upholding Canadian ownership is at the core of ACP’s mandate, and is the foundation on which a thriving Canadian industry has developed,” said ACP president Glenn Rollans. “Through thorough research and analysis, MacSkimming identifies where successive governments have misapplied the ownership policy, to the detriment of the Canadian industry. As the government continues to work under the Creative Canada Policy Framework, we encourage meaningful implementation of the policy so that its original objectives—to benefit Canadian authors, their books (in all forms), and readers nation-wide—can be achieved.”

The report is available for download from ACP’s [website](#).

The ACP is the national voice of Canada’s independent English-language book publishers. The ACP supports its 115 members in creating an economically sustainable Canadian-owned and -controlled publishing industry. Visit www.publishers.ca for more information about the association’s programs and mandate.

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