

Press Council Study Launched

TORONTO - Canadians are being asked to share their opinions on the future of Canada's press councils.

A public survey, now available online, is the first stage of a study conducted by Ryerson University's journalism research centre. The study is being conducted at the request of Newspapers Canada, the national body representing news organizations which, in turn, fund most provincial press councils.

"We're seeking input from anyone with an interest in the issue," said Ryerson researcher Lisa Taylor. "That means hearing not just from journalists and other people in the media business, but from the public at large. If you care about the public function of journalism, and how journalism can best be accountable to the people it serves, we want to hear from you."

Preliminary results of the survey will be presented at the Newspapers Canada conference, Ink and Beyond, on April 27th, and will inform a series of in-depth interviews with stakeholders in later stages of the study. Taylor, a lawyer who teaches multimedia journalism at Ryerson, says the final report is expected by the end of 2012.

In recent years, decreased membership and funds have threatened the viability of some of Canada's provincial/regional press councils, which were established to uphold freedom of speech and to consider complaints about questionable journalistic practices. The Ryerson study will explore the issues faced by, and strategies adopted by, Canadian councils, as well as equivalent bodies in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the U.S.

In the 40 years since Canada's first press councils were established, the media landscape has changed dramatically. "Citizens are no longer just the audience," Taylor noted. "They're no longer passive recipients of information--they shape journalism and, when they're not happy, news consumers have ways to make their voices heard through social media."

People interested in completing the online questionnaire can find it here:

<https://survey.ryerson.ca/s?s=2005> (English)

https://survey.ryerson.ca/s?s=2005&lang=fr_CA (French)

Ivor Shapiro, chair of the Ryerson School of Journalism and an ethics professor, is overseeing the study. The study is being supported by an arms-length personal donation by John Honderich, chair of the board of TorStar, with additional funding from Mitacs-Accelerate, Canada's premiere research internship program. Mitacs-Accelerate funds enable graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to apply theory in real-world settings, while companies gain a competitive advantage by accessing high-quality research expertise.

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