

Freedom of Expression. Trudeau Government Plans Motion to Stop Bill C-10 Debate

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Global Research, June 08, 2021

[Michael Geist](#) 4 June 2021

Region: [Canada](#)

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Earlier this week, Bloc leader Yves-François Blanchet [called for a “gag order”](#) on Bill C-10, which would limit debate on the bill using a process known as time allocation.

The irony of calling for a gag order on debate over a bill with profound implications for freedom of expression is likely not lost on many Canadians. But worse than a regional, separatist party with 32 MPs calling for a gag order is the Minister of Canadian Heritage doing so. That is precisely what happened last night, as Steven Guilbeault [announced](#) that the government would be introducing a motion to cut off debate on Bill C-10.

[Guilbeault’s statement](#) in support of the gag order is riddled with inaccuracies and omissions:

- He claims that lengthy bill study has been the product of “systematic obstruction”, but anyone following committee debate will fairly note the genuine questions and concerns about the proposed legislation, which Guilbeault himself has [failed to coherently address](#) in repeated media interviews.
- He argues that there has been many witnesses, yet does not acknowledge that [digital-first Canadian creators](#) were never asked to appear before committee.
- He makes no mention of the fact that the hearings over the past month have been focused on the implications of changes that the government itself made by moving to regulate user generated content, thereby opening the door to concerns about [speech regulation](#) and violations of [net neutrality](#).
- He does not acknowledge the remarkable uncertainty in the bill with core terms not defined, thresholds not identified, and massive power delegated to the CRTC, which has [proven itself unsuitable](#) for such responsibility.
- He suggests that the bill means lost support of \$70 million per month, when the reality is that foreign services are among the largest supporters of film production in Canada and any new revenues from the bill will [ultimately be paid by Canadian consumers](#).
- His \$70 million per month claim is particularly absurd given that the bill envisions months of hearings before the CRTC before anything is finalized. To suggest that debating dozens of amendments – many raised by the government

- or Liberal MPs – is delaying any payments is plainly false.
- He speaks of the opposition supporting web giants when Guilbeault's own department has advised that the bill could [regulate everything](#) from podcast apps to home workout videos to audiobook platforms.

For the Minister of Canadian Heritage to respond to legitimate, widely held concerns about the freedom of expression impact of legislation by seeking to cut off debate makes a mockery of our Canadian heritage.

The appropriate response is for the creator lobby groups who claimed to be ardent supporters of free speech to speak out against a legislative gag order, for opposition parties to say no to a process unworthy of a government that proclaimed that better is always possible, and for the government to live up to those ideals by withdrawing the bill and hitting the reset button.

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