**OPEN LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

The media outlets publishing this letter are competitors. We publish news in every region in Canada. In both languages. We don’t always see eye-to-eye.

So an open letter to you – and the prominence we’re giving it in our publications – is unprecedented. But then so is the threat to news media in Canada. And, frankly, so shocking is the inaction of your government that it demands this unprecedented step.

For months, you and the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Steven Guilbeault, have promised action to rein in the predatory monopoly practices of Google and Facebook against Canadian news media. But so far, all we’ve gotten is talk. And with every passing week, that talk grows hollower and hollower.

As you know, the two web giants are using their control of the Internet and their highly sophisticated algorithms to divert 80% of all online advertising revenue in Canada. And they are distributing the work of professional journalists across the country without compensation.

This isn’t just a Canadian problem. Google and Facebook are using their monopoly powers in the same way throughout the world – choking off journalism from the financial resources it needs to survive.

The difference is that other countries are putting their foot down. Australia’s parliament – with support from all parties – has enacted comprehensive new legislation requiring the two web giants to negotiate collectively with that country’s media. And they’ve backed up these new rules with enforcement teeth.

Time and again, you and your government have committed to similar action. The Minister of Canadian Heritage has specifically and repeatedly committed to tabling legislation this spring. But after months of promises, there is still no legislation. And with the summer parliamentary recess approaching and the strong possibility of a fall general election, words alone will not sustain Canadian journalists through the long months of legislative inaction and relentless power plays by Google and Facebook.

Indeed, recently, Facebook announced short-term commercial arrangements with a few Canadian media outlets. Until all news media in this country can negotiate collectively with Google and Facebook, the two multinationals will continue to use their market dominance to drive terms that are in their interests.

Let’s be clear: Canadian news media are not looking for new funding or new taxes, or user fees. We’re not calling for – and certainly don’t want – restrictions or regulations affecting freedom of speech.

In fact, the health of our democracy depends on a vibrant and healthy media. To put it bluntly, that means that you, Prime Minister, need to keep your word: to introduce legislation to break the Google/Facebook stranglehold on news before the summer recess. It’s about political will – and promised action. Your government’s promise.

The fate of news media in Canada depends on it. In no small way, so too does the fate of our democracy.

Signed,

Jamie Irving

Chair of News Media Canada

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