

NDP Response to CIPPIC's questions on Election 2006 Received Jan. 10th, 2006

New Democrats have traditionally expressed support for measures that protect the rights of creators, and ensure that their work is valued and compensated, whether it appears on the radio, in print media, on the internet or elsewhere.

New Democrats have also expressed that any copyright legislation needs to balance the rights of creators, users and distributors. Creators must be fairly compensated for their work, and only a creator can waive that right. At the same time, users need fair access, in order to encourage a vital Canadian culture. We would support legislative measures that involve a careful balancing of all of these factors.

It should also be noted that Bill C-60, a Liberal government initiative to protect intellectual property online through amendments to the Copyright Act, died on the Order Paper with the last parliament (38th Parliament) and that the NDP continues to study issues around copyright carefully, especially in the area of internet and digital file sharing.

More recently NDP Heritage Critic, Charlie Angus, has said the following on internet and digital copyright.

- The Liberal government initiative to protect intellectual property online through amendments to the Copyright Act (bill C-60) is wrongheaded.
- The Heritage Committee recommendations [on bill C-60] could put up barriers that would see schools pay extended licensing fees for students' use of online content and even limit rights libraries hold to share Internet resources.
- What's being proposed could have some very profound implications. If acted upon, the recommendations could herald the end of the Internet as a digital intellectual commons.

Angus calls efforts to protect creative rights laudable, but has said an attitude of protectionism emanating from the Heritage Ministry could cripple independent artists and musicians, and that:

- Downloading and peer-to-peer sharing of music files can be seen as a nightmare for recording artists losing out on potential royalties, but it's also a way for independent musicians to promote their talent.
- There is a royalty problem but it has to be put into perspective. Only "supergroups" like U2 who sell millions of albums actually feel the negative effects of downloading. For most recording artists, the peer-to-peer phenomenon is welcome.
- For independent musicians there's been an incredible opportunity to get creative content and control it themselves.