

Post



July 17, 2023

Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen
Board Chair and Board of Directors
101, Martin Street
Penticton, BC
V2A 5J9

Dear Board Chair Mark Pendergraft, CAO Bill Newell, Communications Supervisor Erick Thompson, and the Board of Directors.

We are writing to ask the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen to show its support for local news media by following the example of the Province of British Columbia and the Federal and Quebec governments and stop all advertising with Meta platforms Facebook and Instagram. We are also asking that you direct staff to divert the portion of your advertising budget spent on Meta to invest in local news media.

Penticton Western News, Summerland Review and the Keremeos Review needs your assistance to safeguard the ongoing ability of our journalists to continue to report freely on matters of public interest. Canadian media is facing unprecedented challenges that are affecting our ability to continue to publish journalism that readers can trust. Our huge audience growth over the past ten years isn't reflected in the advertising investment by governments and private corporations. As audience numbers continued to grow at an unprecedented pace, media investment supporting Canadian news organizations has dropped from 23.1 per cent in 2014 to a mere 5.7 per cent in a five-year span.

With the passage of Bill C-18, the Online News Act, Meta has announced it will remove all accredited news content from its pages rather than negotiate a fair deal with Canadian news media. Google has also indicated that unless its demands are met, it will deindex news organizations, making it impossible for Canadians to find local news sources using Google search.

More than ever, democratic principles are under attack from bad actors that spread information at a rate only made possible by algorithm-driven mega-companies like Meta that control almost every facet of our information networks.

Trusted news sources like Penticton Western News, Summerland Review and the Keremeos Review are an important indicator of a thriving democracy. We've gained huge audiences by adding balance in an increasingly unbalanced world and by helping to communicate the work being done by many non-profit organizations, service clubs,

business associations and individuals to build a better community for all. Black Press Media averages more than 4.1 million unique views a month on our news sites including Penticton Western News, Summerland Review, and the Keremeos Review.

We ask that the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen use its economic clout and join its provincial and Canadian counterparts and governments around the world that are taking a stand at this crucial time in history to proclaim that the power to decide how and what information is shared isn't the purview of an elite group of foreign-based players but should be in the hands of democratic governments and the people who elect them.

We thank you for your time and we trust the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen will side with Canadian news media and the democratic principles that have shaped our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warren Smith', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Warren Smith
Group Publisher

Penticton Western News, Summerland Review, and the Keremeos Review.