

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

# Print-disabled community in Canada requires government's support without delay

Michael Geist's recent article "Why has Canada still not signed the Copyright Treaty to Support the Blind?" (*The Hill Times*, June 16, p. 10) touches on a critical issue of importance to more than 600,000 Canadians.

The Canadian Library Association (CLA), along with many other organizations and the print-disabled community in Canada, celebrated the adoption of the WIPO Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled (VIP Treaty) on June 27, 2013. The Canadian government was deservedly commended for its role in the successful completion of the negotiations.

CLA notes that as of April 30, 2014, 64 countries have signed the VIP Treaty including the European Union and the United States. To date, it is our understanding that Canada has not yet signed. CLA trusts that it is the Government of Canada's intent to sign the VIP Treaty in a timely manner.

Article 17 of the VIP Treaty, Signature of the Treaty, reads "This treaty shall be opened for signature at the Diplomatic Conference in Marrakesh, and thereafter at the headquarters of WIPO by any eligible party for one year after its adoption." One year after adoption will be June 27, 2014—just a few short days away, and we have seen no action from the Canadian government.



Industry Minister James Moore. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

If this article is being interpreted correctly, this means that Canada could be faced with obstacles to signing the VIP Treaty after June 27. Therefore, clearly the signing of the VIP Treaty takes on great short-term urgency.

There is currently an information gap between those who can read traditional print and those who need alternative ways of accessing the information they need and deserve. CLA hopes and strongly urges the Government of Canada to sign the VIP Treaty without further delay, in order to support and improve access to information for persons who are blind and visually impaired.

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