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President's Message

by Stephen Cribar



Keep Calm and Carry On

Well it certainly has been an interesting year and, as this is my last message as President, I hope to end on a positive note, even though we do need to take a hard look at the issues facing booksellers in Canada. We must keep the dialogue open at the National Conference in May and beyond.

Amazon

The decision came down in April and, as we predicted, the government will allow the Amazon distribution centre to go ahead. Of course, Amazon provided a list of commitments—both monetary and a promise to feature Canadian authors and assist Canadian publishers—but it is a disappointing decision as it seems the government is content to place

the task of carrying the torch for Canadian literary culture in the hands of a giant US retailer. We raised our voices, had a lot of media attention, and although it was after the fact, we were invited to meet with Heritage Minister James Moore.

There certainly was a firestorm over this issue and I personally need to thank CBA Vice President Mark Lefebvre for his stand-up job on TV and radio through the peak of the story. We also had a fair number of strong and eloquent supporters come to our defense, such as Roy MacSkimming, Peter Waldock and Mel Hurtig to name a few. Thank you also to Susan Dayus, the staff at CBA and Retail Council of Canada for their coaching, advice and support through it all. Lastly, thanks to all the booksellers in Canada who took the time to send notes of support and

to write passionate letters to your MPs. Keep calm and carry on.

Pricing

The Canadian dollar reaching parity has once again raised the ghost of the book pricing issue. The media has been all over the story of why a book costs more in Canada than in the States. It is unfortunate that prices are printed on books, because if you look hard enough you can see that many products cost more in Canada than they do in the US: toys, clothing, cereal, etc. It seems books are the media's target and our customers are left questioning our methods. This is an issue that the entire industry needs to fix—the sooner the better.

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