

Canadian Association of Journalists

Board Meeting - Saturday, Sept 17

Centennial College, Toronto

Present:

Board members:

Hugo Rodrigues

Paul Schneidereit

Elizabeth Thompson

Dale Bass

Melissa Lampman

Simon Doyle

Ellin Bessner

Staff:

Anja Karadeglija

1) The meeting was called to order by D. Bass, chair, at approximately 10:30 a.m.

2) Approval of agenda

3) Approval of minutes of past meetings

Moved by E. Bessner and P. Schneidereit

Carried

4) Report of the ad-hoc committee on professionalization established at the May 15 board meeting

E. Thompson, committee co-chair, informed the board of the progress made thus far. The committee met earlier in the summer in Montreal. E. Thompson summarized the opinions of the Montreal chapter, which were in general opposed to professionalization, and said the committee is currently waiting for the written responses of the committee

members on the report released by minister Christine St. Pierre in August. E. Thompson said that the committee had also asked the general membership for their opinion, and the responses did not lean definitively one way or another. She recommended that if the CAJ were to submit a brief, it should say that there is a great diversity of the opinion among journalists; that it point out pros, cons, and potential issues, but that the CAJ not take a position on way or another.

The board discussed the e-mail list that was used to ask for responses, and reviewed the number of bounces, responses, etc.

S. Doyle asked for the number of pro or con responses, which the board reviewed. According to the e-mails sent to E. Thompson, the total who answered yes was six, and the number of those who answered no was nine, with one member remaining neutral.

The board then gave their opinions. D. Bass agreed with E. Thompson that the CAJ should tell St. Pierre that membership is divided, the issue needs further study, and include that the government is rushing and not moving as wisely as it could be.

S. Doyle said that he was against professionalization, but that the timing at the moment was too rushed to respond, and said that the CAJ does not have to make up its position on professionalization at the moment; if it does need to respond, the CAJ can respond to the host of problems that this proposal creates.

E. Bessner said that the CAJ needs to conduct more focus groups across the country, and consult members through phone chats and Twitter, between now and the 2012 conference, in order to reach more people in more effective way. She said that she would prefer the industry regulates itself than having a government minder. Overall, she does not have a position and would need to give it more thought, but said that any government intervention is bad thing.

E. Thompson noted that should professionalization be put in place, the FPJQ wants to be the governing body in Quebec, and asked whether the CAJ would want to do this in the rest of the country. Said that she was of two minds on the question, and brought up the definitions the national press gallery uses to determine whom to admit.

P. Schneidereit said that he believes the idea behind this is fundamentally wrong. He asked why professionalization is necessary, if the public makes up its mind about credibility of journalists no matter the title, and noted that lawyers have a title but are not trusted. Secondly, as a journalist he is opposed to government involvement. He said that even if he thought this was a great idea, the question stands of how this could be done, and who would do it? He also asked whether the people who own media companies are going to accept this. He noted that the CAJ does not know what the vast majority of members think, other than they did not think it was worth responding to, and that the responses indicate the vehemence with which people view this. He added that this could provoke a crisis in membership of the CAJ.

M. Lampman said that she is neutral, but that the CAJ does need to talk to more members and take a stance, but that stance should be neutral. She said that she does not want to agree or disagree at this point.

H. Rodrigues said that during his time as president, he has been surprised by how many people want the CAJ to give them press cards/membership cards, and asked whether that isn't a form of accreditation, as it can function as a barrier to entry. He said that he is not a Quebecer, but that he does have an awareness of reality in Quebec. H. Rodrigues said that he was very encouraged by the CAJ's recently revised guidelines of practice and code of ethics, and noted that it has, as an organization, looked at those questions. He added that he does share some of the concerns that have been expressed about government making definitions.

The board discussed the issue, comparing the question at hand to the way that Parliamentary Press Gallery deals with the questions of whom to admit.

5) Motion by D. Bass – that the CAJ submit a response saying that we “move CAJ respond to the Quebec government.”

P. Schneidereit stated that he could not support that.

E. Thompson suggested that the response outline the issues the Quebec government should consider before proceeding with the proposal. Proposes an amendment to the motion: that the response “will outline the issues the Quebec government should consider before proceeding with the proposal.”

E. Bessner asked whether the CAJ's participation in the consultations legitimises the process.

P. Schneidereit said that he agrees with that, and that the board should be categorically against the idea that the government be involved in deciding who is a journalist.

S. Doyle said that because the CAJ has received comments from members supportive of professionalization, he would support saying the issue needs more discussion.

D. Bass withdrew the motion.

P. Schneidereit suggested a motion that: “the CAJ state its opposition to the St. Pierre report and state that the government should not be writing legislation that leads to definitions of who is and who is not a journalist.”

S. Doyle seconded the motion, and the board discussed the matter.

S. Doyle suggested a friendly amendment to change “opposed” to “strong concerns.”

E. Bessner moved to table the motion, P. Schneidereit seconded it, motion carried.

D. Bass moved to adjourn the meeting, motion carried

6) The meeting resumed at 1:24 p.m.

The board continued its discussion on the tabled motion : that the “CAJ state its strong concern to proposals related to the part of the St. Pierre report dealing with the title

of professional journalist and state that the Quebec government should not be writing legislation that leads to definitions of who is and who is not a journalist”

Motion carries, with E. Thompson opposed to the motion.

H. Rodrigues asked how the board will have a suggestion ready in time for the Sept. 23 deadline, and the board considered whether to make an in-person appearance or only submit a brief.

P. Schneidereit offered to write the brief, and the board discussed the details.

S. Doyle submitted the motion “that CAJ recognizes some interest among its members in a professional title for journalists and is open to further discussion and consultation.”

E. Bessner seconded it; motion carried.

H. Rodrigues proposed postponing discussion of how to proceed until the next day.

7) H. Rodrigues presented the president’s report to the board.

He submitted the motion that “the CAJ executive committee be tasked with reviewing the existing CAJ policies; that any necessary amendments be presented to the CAJ board at its next regular board meeting; and that if any amendments are approved by the CAJ board this be done in time to present the revised policies to members at the 2012 CAJ AGM.”

Motion carried.

P. Schneidereit began discussion of liability insurance, and H. Rodrigues moved the meeting go in camera for the duration of that discussion.

After the meeting moved out of in camera, H. Rodrigues continued his presentation of the president’s report.

The board considered the options to be taken regarding the post office box; P. Schneidereit stated that the CAJ should avoid unnecessary costs. E. Thompson offered to check the mail box and forward the mail to the relevant board members and staff.

H. Rodrigues presented a motion: “That the membership services committee conduct a review of e-registernow and any other available websites that would be suitable for CAJ membership management; and that a report with recommendations on whether to renew the annual agreement with e-registernow or seek a different solution be presented electronically to the CAJ board in October.”

E. Thompson put forward a motion that A. Karadeglija conduct the research necessary rather than the membership committee.

The members discussed whether and how to seek a different solution, and who should take responsibility of finding and choosing a solution. M. Lampman offered to help with choosing a new system.

Motion was amended, and carried.

H. Rodrigues suggested “that the membership services committee conduct a review of available mass-mailing platforms and make a recommendation on whether the CAJ stays with MailChimp or uses another similar service, with a report due back by the end of 2011.

E. Thompson said that MailChimp is fulfilling the organization’s needs, and suggested that the board revisit the issue at a later date

H. Rodrigues moved to rescind the motion made by the board previously to spend money on Constant Contact, motion carried.

The board discussed the Ryerson Review of Journalism inquiry about whether the CAJ would be interested in advertising. E. Thompson suggested an exchange of services between the CAJ and the RRJ instead of purchasing an ad, and the board discussed the options, whether the ad should promote membership or the conference, and what the CAJ can offer in return (space at conferences, discount, etc). H. Rodrigues said that he will follow up with Ryerson representative.

The board considered the appointment of an alternate spokesperson for the period that H. Rodrigues is away. P. Schneiderei said that he is willing to take care of routine enquires, but the board needs a bilingual spokesperson on the submission to minister St. Pierre. E. Bessner volunteered to serve as spokesperson.

Motion by H. Rodrigues: “That the CAJ appoint Ellen Bessner to be the spokesperson in lieu of the president for the association, when necessary, in all matters relating to the Quebec government submission once it has been delivered to the minister.” P. Schneiderei seconded, motion carried.

Discussion of two options as outlined in the president’s report; whether to “refer our submission to the Quebec government to the ethics advisory for review and advice on how to proceed with a position on the larger question of the professionalization of journalists. [or] Refer some other question relating to the broader concept of professionalization to the committee.”

E. Thompson suggested asking about codes of ethics across the country. H. Rodrigues asked for suggestions for members of the ethics advisory committee. E. Bessner put forward a name, and D. Bass suggested someone who is familiar with the reality of newsroom. The board concluded that a candidate should ideally be a working journalist, and from the West.

H. Rodrigues submitted the motion “that the CAJ accept with regret the resignation of Manitoba region representative Ruth Shead, effective Sept. 14, 2011;” motion carried.

The board discussed a group membership/ bulk enrolment request the CAJ received from Sheridan College. P. Schneiderei brought up the CAJ’s history of doing similar deals, and the board considered the pros and cons. E. Thompson suggested putting forward a general policy for bulk membership.

P. Schneidereit suggested tabling discussion of the issue until tomorrow.

D. Bass gave her report to the board, which was carried.

The board discussed whether to sign on to the pledge sent to the CAJ by an organization called Voices-Voix. The board agreed to look into the matter.

The board discussed how high a discount members would feel comfortable with giving to those seeking bulk memberships and the discussion was tabled.

8) Meeting adjourned at approximately 5 p.m.

Canadian Association of Journalists

Board Meeting - Sunday, Sept 18

Centennial College, Toronto

1. The meeting was called to order by D. Bass, chair, at approximately 9:45 a.m.
2. The board continued its discussion of Sheridan College's inquiry re: bulk membership and gave H. Rodrigues guidance as to how to accommodate the request.
3. H. Rodrigues moved a motion to accept the president's report, P. Schneidereit seconded, motion carried.
4. P. Schneidereit presented his financial report to the board.
E. Bessner asked about revenues from conference sponsorship fees, and the members discussed the possibility of fees as revenue generator, as well as the projection for future membership revenues.

The board discussed the CAJ storage locker, location, contents, as well as the membership drive, business cards, liability insurance, and HST collection.

E. Bessner seconded the motion to accept the report, motion carried.

5. M. Lampman presented her communication report
D. Bass asked whether press releases are responsibility of communication committee or president.
E. Bessner asked about contacting people who "liked" CAJ online.

S. Doyle asked for clarification on the relationship between J-Source and the CAJ, and suggested posting articles from Media magazine online individually as opposed to in a PDF.

E. Bessner moved to accept report, motion carried.

6. The board discussed the communications strategy for CAJ brief/response to the St. Pierre report, translation of brief, and brief submission procedures.

7. E. Bessner asked about the CAJ website and how it could be improved.

8. H. Rodrigues presented the 2012 conference report.
The board talked about potential ideas for events, issues surrounding joint sessions and how to organize them, room availability, size, and other questions.

P. Schneidereit asked about the budget for bringing in speakers and workshop leaders.

The board continued general discussion over the conference.

Motion to accept, moved by H. Rodrigues, seconded by M. Lampman, motion carried.

9. H. Rodrigues and P. Schneidereit gave the background, history and structure behind the CAJ Educational Foundation, and the board discussed its future, issues surrounding the organization's status, the ways the two organizations can work together, and ways in which the CAJ can help CAJEF.

10. New business

H. Rodrigues moved that the CAJ obtain liability insurance at the soonest possible time. Seconded by S. Doyle, motion carried.

11) Meeting adjourned, and called back to order at 1:10

11. H. Rodrigues introduced the committees and their members, outlining their responsibilities. The committees then met and discussed their relevant issues.

12. Meeting adjourned.