Press freedom in Canada has evolved a lot over the last few decades. One of the many reasons for this is that new technologies have forced journalists, editors, lawyers, and others to rethink how press freedom functions (and does not) at a time when the press is no longer publishing on a regular, set, and limited schedule but, rather, is publishing updates in real time, at all times. The book, The Unfulfilled Promise of Press Freedom in Canada, edited by Lisa Taylor and Cara-Marie O'Hagan, explores the evolution of press freedom in Canada since the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in light of developments in the media industry. The book is an attempt “to contextualize the first decades of press freedom under the Charter, reflect on other developments in Canadian press freedom law since 1982, critically interrogate the current state of affairs, and advance possible remedies to the ongoing challenges related to access to information and freedom of expression faced by both traditional and emerging media” (p. 4). It is an anthology based on a conference that was held at Ryerson University, which marked “the thirtieth anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms” in 2012 (p. 233).

Overall, The Unfulfilled Promise of Press Freedom in Canada covers a lot of ground within its overarching topic. The first of four parts, “Press Freedom and Internal Pressures,” explores self-censorship in the media. It looks at, among other things, how decisions to self-censor are made and why, and how business models, which rely on clicks and views in combination with technology that provides audience data that is more precise than ever before, can affect press freedom. The second part of the book, “Press Freedom and Court Processes,” considers the information that journalists have access to when covering court proceedings and what journalists are allowed to report on throughout the proceedings. It provides insight into how publication bans work, including how they may work against the wishes of the victims of sexual assault who want their names to be published but face barriers to getting around publication bans. This part of the book also provides a look at press freedom in Canada before and after the implementation of the Charter. It considers things such as access to court exhibits and the use of cameras in courtrooms. The next section of the book, “Press Freedom and Institutional Secrecy,” looks at access to information law. It considers how barriers, including fees and lengthy wait times, can affect access to information by the press. The final section, “Press Freedom and the Charter,” looks at how the Charter has affected press freedom in the country. In one chapter, press freedom in Canada is compared to press freedom in Australia, which does not have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

One of the most compelling characteristics of this book is that the reader benefits from the perspectives of those who are experts in, and have experience with, Canadian
press freedom as lawyers, journalists, academics, and public servants. This gives the
reader the opportunity to understand the topic of Canadian press freedom from the
points of view of people whose expertise and experience with the subject has been
learned and gained in different ways. Furthermore, the first-person accounts through-
out the book, including in “The Real Danger to Press Freedom” by Tony Burman,
which details, among other things, the author’s experiences with self-censorship dur-
ing his time at the CBC, and in “Municipal Access to Information, Delays, and Denials:
An Insider’s View,” by Suzanne Craig, which is informed by the author’s experience
working as a government-access professional and the director of corporate access and
privacy for the City of Toronto, among other relevant roles, bring the subject to life.

The biggest strength of this book also plays into one of its weaknesses, which is
that the diversity of the individual chapters, as well as the general organization of the
book, results in a lack of cohesiveness. Each individual chapter is enlightening, but as
a collection of works it can be confusing as the chapters are not all written for the same
audience. For example, Robert Koopmans’ chapter, “Must News Reporters Be Guerilla
Lawyers to Protect Their Rights?” Covering the Canadian Justice System in Small
Communities,” provides a how-to list for journalists who want or need to be guerilla
lawyers. It is informative and well written but more directly and obviously intended
for journalists than the rest of the book.

Perhaps more to the point is the fact that, while the book is introduced with an em-
phasis on Canadian press freedom in relation to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms,
there is no real examination of the Charter or historical context provided until the sec-
ond part of the book. This is despite the fact that the introduction makes assertions in-
cluding that “the threats to journalists’ raison d’être are real, our victories have often
been partial, and those gains we have made under the Charter often appear to be a risk”
(p. 4). This assertion is made without an examination of what gains were made under
the Charter or how they are at risk. With little examination of the Charter until Chapter
six, the book lacks a logical flow that is important to understanding the book’s contents
as a whole and understanding press freedom specifically in relation to the Charter.

Despite any flaws the book may have, it is a very informative collection of works
on press freedom in Canada. It does an excellent job of examining the topic from a va-
riety of relevant perspectives. Each individual chapter is well thought-out, researched,
and written. The first-person accounts included throughout the book bring the topic
to life and contribute to a nuanced understanding of how press freedom works in
Canada both in theory and in actual practice.

_Amanda Oye, York University_