

THEME – Law in a Wired World

This issue of LawNow is called “Law in a Wired World.” The articles look at how the law, sometimes perceived as dusty and archaic, responds to new challenges presented by the Internet, and other ground-breaking technology. The law must break new ground too, and this issue examines some of the ways in which it does.

1. There is a new concept in business law: e-commerce. Andrew Buddle, a lawyer with the firm of Bennett Jones LLP in Edmonton, Alberta reviews the perils and pitfalls of electronic contracts and the laws in Alberta and Canada that regulate them.
2. Our new wired world has huge implications for our social lives too. Another Bennett Jones lawyer, Martin Kratz examines the world of social networking, and cautions about potential problems.
3. One of the problems that has emerged from social networking is cyber-bullying. Melissa Luhtanen, a lawyer with the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre at the University of Calgary, defines the problem, looks at some examples, and suggests remedies.
4. Canada has had several short-lived attempts to update and modernize our *Copyright Act*. An upside to the failure to make progress is that many groups have had a chance to join in the discussion about what a modern Act should include. Olivier Charbonneau, Associate Librarian with Concordia University in Montréal, Quebec, highlights some of the areas of debate.
5. Several Canadian provinces are producing “smart” driver’s licences; ones with special identification encryption. In the future they may be used instead of passports for border crossings by land into the United States. Professors Andrew Clement and Colin Bennett discuss the legal and privacy concern raised by these licences.

SPECIAL REPORT – Officers of Parliament

Governments must delegate some duties, so officers of legislatures and Parliament are appointed to specific and important tasks. This Special Report looks at several of these appointments.

1. Prisoners in federal institutions have redress to the Office of the Correctional Investigator when they think they have been aggrieved. Charles Davison examines the role, powers, and work of this Officer of Parliament.
2. Linda Keen became a household name in Canada when she became embroiled in a dispute with the federal government over her role as Chair of the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. Duane Bratt, a Professor with Mount Royal College in Calgary, dissects the dispute, and discusses its importance in assessing the independence of such positions.