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Piracy A \$30 Billion Racket In Canada?

Claims that counterfeiting has ballooned to a multi-billion dollar black market in Canada is prompting the [Department of Public Safety](#) to commission a first-ever study of the trade.

The department said it will gauge the extent of piracy and bootlegging after citing one estimate it's now worth \$30 billion a year in Canada.

"How long is a piece of string?" said Wayne Edwards, chair of the [Canadian Anti-Counterfeiting Network](#). "I have no reason to doubt that number. The problem is so humongous it's more than a crime wave."

Public Safety Canada did not comment. However in a department notice, authorities cited data from the website [Havoscope.com](#) that estimated \$30 billion in Canadian counterfeiting includes \$1.14 billion a year in pirated software, and \$118 million in bootleg movies. The Havoscope data is based on media articles, academic journals and reports from police and other government agencies.

"While Havoscope admits the reported values are not perfect, its enormous estimates sourced from publicly-available information demonstrate just how important it is to focus on producing reliable estimates," reported Public Safety.

The department appealed for interest in a \$60,000 study due by March 3, 2014 on "possible recommendations on detailed methodologies that could be used to estimate the size of the market for counterfeit and pirated goods in Canada."

The [Public Prosecution Service](#) has told Parliament that counterfeiting accounted for 00.1 percent of its prosecutions last year. And the RCMP estimate the value of seized counterfeit goods at \$38 million annually.

"How much are the RCMP stopping? I've heard it is about 1 percent," said Edwards; "We don't have numbers either. A lot of this is driven by the underworld and criminal gangs; they're not going to share numbers with you."

The Commons industry committee is scheduling hearings on a piracy measure, Bill C-56 *An Act To Amend The Copyright Act* introduced last March 1, that proposes \$1 million fines and five years' imprisonment for the manufacture, sale and distribution of counterfeit goods under the *Trademarks Act* as well as the *Copyright Act*.

“When intellectual property is taken into account, theft has become an acceptable way of doing business – a way of life,” said Edwards. “There is a whole mindset today that theft is alright. It’s sad. This is what we face every day.”

Bill C-56 would permit copyright owners to request the Department of Industry to help track and seize cross-border shipments of counterfeit products. However applicants would be liable for the cost of storing, handling and destroying bootleg items.

By Staff 
