

## Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **Words Used as Weapons of Mass Distraction** **David Barsamian challenges euphemisms that distort truth**

**EDMONTON, AB, March 5, 2012** – Swimming against the American media tide for more than 25 years, David Barsamian discussed world affairs, the United States' foreign policy and the manufacture of public consent at the downtown public library on March 3<sup>rd</sup> to mark [Freedom to Read Week](#).

“Words are used as a powerful tool in shaping public opinion,” said Barsamian. “We are capable of remembering, analyzing and debating sports statistics in depth and with passion. If we challenge the messages we hear in the media and from the political class with the same passion, we’ll have more accountable governments. Dissent and debate are signs of a healthy democracy.”

It was Barsamian’s first visit to Edmonton, sponsored by the Edmonton Public Library (EPL) and CJSR Radio, which broadcasts his weekly program *Alternative Radio*. The talk show, along with his books, has altered the independent media landscape.

“It’s the responsibility of public libraries to guarantee access to all expressions of knowledge, including those which some people may find offensive, unpopular or unacceptable,” said Brent McDonough, Chair of the Edmonton Public Library Board of Trustees, who introduced Barsamian to the crowd of almost 200 people. “Mr. Barsamian’s advice to seek out alternative sources of information and look at the world from different perspectives fits with EPL’s mandate to protect intellectual freedom and ensure uncensored access to materials of varying topics, beliefs and opinions.”

Proclaiming Freedom to Read Week in Edmonton, Mayor Stephen Mandel said, “Freedom to Read Week celebrates intellectual freedom in Canada and reminds us about ongoing challenges to our freedom to read, speak, view, listen, create and perform what we choose. The Edmonton Public Library champions the right of people to pursue the truth through free inquiry, which is essential to our democracy.”

Born to Armenian immigrants who settled in New York City, Barsamian credits the NY public library with changing his life. Citing George Orwell as an early influence, he read from a worn copy of 1984 to demonstrate the ongoing relevance of some of Orwell's concerns, particularly the use of euphemisms and the passive voice, as they relate to the world of contemporary journalism.

After living in India and then returning to New York, he moved to Boulder, Colorado in 1978, where he volunteered with a community radio station. When people began to ask for tapes of Barsamian's programs, he realized there was a potential audience beyond Boulder. In 1986, he launched *Alternative Radio* and distributed the show for free, ultimately paying for itself through sales of cassettes, CDs, transcripts – and now, downloads and MP3s.

**Spread the words.**

Today, his independent weekly talk show is broadcast from Barsamian's home to 125 radio stations around the world. Barsamian has conducted more than 1,000 interviews with such progressive thinkers as Arundhati Roy, Eqbal Ahmad, I.F. Stone, Kurt Vonnegut, Naomi Klein and Noam Chomsky. He has co-authored books with Eqbal Ahmad, [Howard Zinn](#), [Tariq Ali](#), [Arundhati Roy](#), [Edward Said](#) and [Noam Chomsky](#). Exposure on *Alternative Radio* has helped push Noam Chomsky to prominence as a serious alternative political voice.

In 2009, the United States Pentagon banned Noam Chomsky's book *Interventions* at Guantanamo Bay prison because it "might negatively impact on good order and discipline." Books, magazines, newspapers and other materials are continually challenged and banned in Canada and around the world. Each challenge seeks to limit public access to materials in schools, libraries or bookstores. Details about books challenged in Canada, ranging from *A Farewell to Arms* to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, can be found on EPL's website at [www.epl.ca/freedomtoread](http://www.epl.ca/freedomtoread), along with a video of Barsamian's presentation.

- 30 -

### **About the Edmonton Public Library**

The Edmonton Public Library (EPL) carries everything you care about. We are Edmonton's largest lender of all manner of information and entertainment. Our professionally trained staff take you beyond Google with the knowledge, discernment and desire to help you navigate a universe of information. Every year, we host over 14 million in-branch and online visits across our 17 branches and website. We deliver our incredible content to you everywhere - in the library, at home or on your handheld device. Unmatched access and unrivalled value - that is today's EPL. Spread the words. [www.epl.ca](http://www.epl.ca).

### **For more information contact:**

Monica Walker  
Senior Marketing Communications Consultant  
Edmonton Public Library  
780-496-7055  
[mwalker@epl.ca](mailto:mwalker@epl.ca)