



Canadian Federation of Library Associations  
Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in  
Advance of the 2022 Federal Budget**

Submitted by:

Canadian Federation of Library Associations  
Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques.

## Summary of Recommendations

1. CFLA-FCAB recommends that the Government of Canada introduce legislation to ensure that Canada's libraries and users have access on reasonable terms to e-content from multinational publishers.
2. CFLA-FCAB recommends that the Government of Canada restore ongoing sustained funding in Budget 2022 for the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) to support an equitable reading landscape in Canada for people with print disabilities and to ensure that inclusive reading options exist across Canada.
3. CFLA-FCAB recommends that the government commit to \$200 million over the next four years to help implement efficient and cost-effective green infrastructure in vital community hubs from coast to coast to coast. Investment in a targeted library upgrade investment fund supports the circular economy and Canada's Federal Sustainable Development Strategies.
4. CFLA-FCAB recommends that the Government of Canada increase the budget allotted to Library and Archives Canada in order to support an appropriate level of response to Access to Information requests.

## **LIBRARIES IN CANADA**

Canada's libraries are, almost exclusively, publicly funded institutions. Whether supported by municipal governments, or as part of educational institutions, they receive public funds to operate.

Over the long-term, libraries help more Canadians access the information and support they need to lead fuller lives, make new discoveries, and better understand the world they live in. Libraries' mission of universal access to knowledge products and information underpins a commitment to equity that makes it possible for Canadians from all socio-economic backgrounds to thrive.

For Canada's long-term recovery from the pandemic, libraries will continue to play their important role in communities and on campuses as centres for sharing knowledge. Many will also play an increasingly important role of providing services to people who continue to face economic hardship as a result of the pandemic. As people who are unemployed or underemployed take a pathway to education and training, research libraries will be critical to their journey.

We look forward to supporting Canadians and call on the government to support us in the mission we share.

## **SUPPORT FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ONLINE MATERIALS**

Libraries provide greater equity in access to knowledge and tools. Libraries purchase a significant proportion on content licenses for digital materials that are crucial to education, research and personal fulfillment that all Canadians benefit from.

In addition to affordable broadband access, online materials such as e-books and audio books are crucial materials for libraries in all communities to deliver. These digital materials are particularly beneficial for rural and remote communities where household access may be weak. We believe access to online materials and resources through public institutions is fundamental to personal growth and economic success in Canada and must be a consideration in our national response.

Unfortunately, multinational publishers are currently limiting libraries' access to e-content. Where these publishers do make e-content available, it is often significantly more expensive than physical copies. For example, Canadian author Louise Penny's book, *A Better Man*, is available to libraries for \$22 in hardcover, for \$60 in eBook, and \$81.50 in eAudio. The \$60 eBook cost allows the book to be checked out electronically 52 times or for two years – whichever happens first. A paper edition would be expected to last three to four years at just over a third of the cost.

Among groups impacted by these barriers, post-secondary students have faced accessibility issues during the pandemic. Due to public health restrictions, post-secondary students have had limited or no access to their institution's libraries. These students have also faced financial difficulties through the loss of part-time jobs intended to support the financial burden of their studies. Accessing the e-content that is needed to succeed in their studies should be the least of students' worries.

Now more than ever, public and institutional libraries should be able to provide accessible e-content to users. While Canadian publishers have ensured that e-content is made available to public libraries, multinational publishers have created significant barriers for library users. Despite changing circumstances during the pandemic, these publishers have failed to make any effort that would ease access to vital information through e-content.

Libraries in the United States have experienced similar problems with multinational publishers. As a result, legislation was passed in the New York and Maryland state legislatures to ensure library access to e-content. Both the New York and the Maryland laws "require publishers who offer to license e-books to the public" to also offer those e-books to libraries on "reasonable" terms. The bill's summary states that the law is designed to ensure that "widely accepted and effective industry practices remain in place while prohibiting harmful practices that discriminate against libraries and harm library patrons."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/86637-new-york-legislature-passes-library-e-book-bill.html>.

CFLA-FCAB is calling on the federal government and the Minister of Canadian Heritage to introduce legislation that would ensure public and institutional libraries and their users have access on reasonable terms to e-content from multinational publishers.

***CFLA-FCAB recommends the Government of Canada introduce legislation to ensure that Canada's libraries and users have access on reasonable terms to e-content from multinational publishers.***

## **SUPPORT FOR CENTRE FOR EQUITABLE LIBRARY ACCESS**

The Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Services (NNELS) are national not-for-profit organizations that provide accessible reading services to approximately 3 million people across Canada with print disabilities.

In the 2020 Fall Economic Statement, the government announced that funding for the CELA and NNELS would be reduced by 25% per year until it is completely phased out in 2024-2025. Although the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion announced in March of 2021 that funding would be restored for the 2021-2022 period, there has been no commitment on CELA's long-term funding requirements. A lack of sustainable funding endangers reading accessibility for Canadians with print disabilities.

Both the CELA and the NNELS are dependent on federal funding to produce accessible reading materials that are otherwise unavailable to vulnerable groups across Canada. These reading materials include accessibility for individuals with visual, physical or learning disabilities.

The CELA and NNELS provide vital public services that ensure equitable access to reading for Canadians with print disabilities. Print disabilities encompass those who are blind or visually impaired, people with cognitive disabilities such as dyslexia, and those with physical disabilities that make it difficult to read a physical book. These services offered by the CELA and NNELS empower Canadians with print disabilities to fully participate in their local communities and contribute to the social, cultural and economic success of Canada.

The government's proposed industry led solution to providing accessible reading materials will not satisfy the demand of those requiring accessible reading products. We call on the federal government to fully restore funding for CELA and NNELS to its previous levels and to establish a dedicated fund to support issues of equitable access to reading materials to ensure a long-term funding source is provided.

***CFLA-FCAB recommends the Government of Canada restore ongoing sustained funding in Budget 2022 for the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) to support an equitable reading landscape in Canada for people with print disabilities and to***

**ensure that inclusive reading options exist across Canada.**

## **SUPPORT FOR COST-EFFECTIVE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

Libraries have been a part of sustainable development long before the term “circular economy” was coined, and as such, Canada’s libraries support the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.<sup>2</sup> As noted in the 2019 progress report, “Modern, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure supports clean economic growth and social inclusion.”<sup>3</sup> Both climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated social inequalities and make it more difficult for Canadians from all backgrounds to grow and succeed. Libraries are always valuable resources, yet are consistently asked to do more with less.

Many libraries face high costs related to deferred maintenance. The costs associated with fixing older library buildings and the increased costs of service delivery make it harder for institutions to choose investments in new, energy efficient equipment. Older buildings are harder to maintain but government can help by supporting investments in new equipment. By doing so, we can improve health and comfort in libraries for customers, reduce carbon emissions, and lower operating costs for these institutions.

In 2016, there were more than 145 million visits to libraries in Canada and demand is steadily rising as the pandemic continues. If the government intends to proceed with an environmentally friendly recovery, retrofitting existing structures is aligned with that goal and will benefit millions of Canadians. In October 2020, the Canada Infrastructure Bank’s Growth Plan included a two billion dollar investment in large-scale building retrofits. This is a step in the right direction towards retrofits broadly but we urge the government to include Canada’s libraries in these and future retrofit plans, no matter the size or scale of the library or the community that it serves.

By addressing maintenance gaps and energy costs, operating funds can be redirected to provide Canadians from coast to coast to coast with spaces to grow and learn, while working with the federal government towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the government’s expansive climate agenda as announced in *A Healthy Environment and A Healthy Economy* in December 2020.

Investing in library infrastructure will bring real social and economic benefits to the people who need it most. Facilities that were founded decades ago are seeing demands for services and collections exponentially increase while remaining underfunded. Retrofitting Canadian libraries will help in the fight against climate change and help to offer safe, healthy spaces for Canadians to access resources as our society and economy recover.

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<sup>2</sup> Canada’s Sustainable Development Strategy. website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/conservation/sustainability/federal-sustainable-development-strategy.html>. Last accessed July 24, 2019. Report: [http://www.fsds-sfdd.ca/downloads/FSDS\\_2019-2022.pdf](http://www.fsds-sfdd.ca/downloads/FSDS_2019-2022.pdf) Last accessed July 9, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

***CFLA-FCAB recommends the next government commit to \$200 million over the next four years to support a targeted library upgrade investment fund.***

## **SUPPORT FOR ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

The *Library and Archives Canada Act* states that the institution is “to be the permanent repository of publications of the Government of Canada and of government and ministerial records that are of historical or archival value”. As such, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) holds archival records for 107 active and over 100 defunct government departments. These records account for 99% of all Access to Information (ATI) requests made to the institution. In 2019-2020, LAC received 2,131 requests, accounting for 5% of their operating budget. This number increases to 7% when taking into consideration the costs associated with digitizing the records.

Due to LAC's funding levels being set in a print-based past, the institution has yet to be provided with adequate support in achieving its mandate in a digital environment. This has caused a number of specific strains on the institution and necessitate further support from the federal government.

Records received from other departments are usually sent in paper format. This means that LAC is responsible for digitizing these records to make them available to the public. The LAC does not receive funding for these operations, nor does it receive reimbursement from the departments sending the physical documents.

Additionally, while a department with good information management could send their records to LAC with restrictions removed or reduced to a minimum, in practice, most records are still transferred closed-by-default. This creates additional delays in satisfying requests while LAC reviews every requested document and sometimes consults with the departments to release information. Adopting an open by default approach would reduce this additional work.

The LAC has worked to develop new and innovative practices that facilitate more efficient and cost-saving practices when reviewing, digitizing and making records available to the public. In order to continue advancement and facilitate appropriate levels of response to Access to Information requests, LAC requires additional funding.

***CFLA-FCAB recommends that the Government of Canada increase the budget allotted to Library and Archives Canada in order to support an appropriate level of response to Access to Information requests.***