



Canadian Federation of Library Associations
Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget

Libraries supporting **Canada's Sustainable Development
Goals**

Submitted by the Canadian Federation of Library
Associations/Fédération canadienne des associations de
bibliothèques.

July 2019

Recommendations

- 1) CFLA-FCAB recommends that the next government commit to \$800M over the next 4 years to support a targeted library upgrade investment fund. Supporting Canada's libraries supports the circular economy and the Canada Sustainable Development Goals.
- 2) CFLA-FCAB recommends that the next government invest \$280M over the next 5 years to support Indigenous knowledge and protocols education in library services that will result in respectful protection and preservation of all types of Indigenous knowledge.
- 3) CFLA-FCAB recommends that the next government commit to sustained, increased funding of \$30M over the next five years to support this coordinated national initiative to digitize content and to build the digital infrastructure required to make Canada's rich documentary heritage available to all Canadians.

SUPPORT TO ADVANCE THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

Libraries have been a part of sustainable development long before the term “the circular economy” was coined, and as such, Canada's libraries support the Sustainable Development Goals. The climate emergency will exacerbate social inequality and make it more difficult for Canadians from all backgrounds to grow and succeed. In 2016, there were more than 145 million visits to libraries in Canada, and this continues to grow. Moving forward, libraries will play an increasingly important role in adapting to these new realities.

Canada's competitiveness depends not only on creating the appropriate environment for businesses to thrive, but also on ensuring everyone can take advantage of new opportunities in the knowledge-based economy. Access to information, tools, and services that unlock creativity and empower progress is vital and Canada's libraries are leading the way toward that goal.

Canada's libraries share the mission of preserving and disseminating Canada's knowledge and heritage—a crucial component of an innovative, productive and forward-looking country. Canada's high rates of educational attainment, literacy and numeracy, and widely available access to the Internet, among other advantages, have supported our competitiveness for decades. However, it is important to note that these benefits are not felt equally in all communities across Canada and we need to prioritize access to information, programs and services at Canada's libraries, which serve communities directly in building human capital, enabling progress, and closing persistent inequality gaps.

Canadians, especially those who face socio-economic barriers, need and expect libraries to provide equitable access to spaces that facilitate digital literacy, collaboration, innovation, and community gathering as well as access to technology. In many communities, especially those that are smaller, remote, or Indigenous, access to adequate library space is often compromised by inadequate infrastructure, both digital and physical.

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 critically underfunded.

Rural broadband Internet access is critical to supporting social infrastructure over the years to come.

In 2009, Industry Canada concluded that the Community Access Program (CAP) had “out-lived its usefulness as a means to bring the internet to communities across Canada” and goes on to state that “internet access and use has increased significantly since the creation of CAP in the mid-1990's, with ninety-four percent (94%) of Canadians

now living in a community where broadband is available for purchase.”¹

The result was a greater emphasis on using the private sector and individuals to provide access and support the costs. The report acknowledged at that time there remained a digital divide among specific demographic groups and that the best way to address this was needed and fell outside of the scope of the Department's final evaluation.²

The role and importance of community anchor organizations, such as libraries, schools and community centres as major community anchor tenants for broadband services has been recognized in the program High-Speed Access for All: Canada's Connectivity Strategy³ noting “Government investment will give special consideration to the needs of anchor institutions, such as libraries, schools, hospitals and local government buildings. Connect to Innovate is connecting more than 1,100 anchor institutions because of their key placement as hubs in communities.”

Rural libraries need significant capacity for broadband and other telecommunication services. They are important organizations for new and smaller telecommunication service providers to service in order to ensure more viable community level business models.

Furthermore, community anchor institutions, and libraries in particular, can serve as particularly valuable showcases for the advantages of new telecommunications services. For example, in Olds, Alberta, when the locally- owned O-Net network was being developed, the Olds Municipal Library served as a showcase for the affordances of the new 1 Gbps fibre optic service. Providing a role for libraries and other community anchor organizations as showcases for new telecommunications services can serve as a means for encouraging demand and uptake of new telecommunications services.

Equity of access to knowledge is increased when all Canadians have access to shared resources purchased by libraries on behalf of Canadians. At the same time, affordable fast Internet access is an essential component of library service in all communities, and has a particularly strong effect in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities where household access may be weak. We believe there is an inherent synergy between broad household access and access through public institutions such as libraries, which are uniquely positioned to catalyze the skills and awareness needed for full penetration.

The digital age has made a wealth of knowledge and resources available to people on a scale impossible to imagine just a few decades ago. Not only has our collective technological progress made these resources more accessible, our ability to interact with that information and people around the globe, has increased tremendously. The possibilities presented by this new reality are immense, but unfortunately people living in many of Canada's rural and remote communities have been left out. This is especially troubling given that people who live furthest from population centres stand to benefit

¹ Final Evaluation of the Community Access Program (CAP) <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/ae-ve.nsf/eng/03126.html#p0.4>

² Ibid

³ http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/139.nsf/eng/h_00002.html

most from the interconnected world that broadband access facilitates.

In Canada today, many new job postings are found exclusively on webpages rather than bulletin boards, supplementary health and wellness information can be found online, and many course materials for college classes exist only in unique digital web-based formats. It is easy to see how essential broadband Internet access is for Canadians in all communities. This can be particularly significant for newcomers to Canada and vulnerable persons who lack institutionalized supports to find employment and access programming.

A study conducted by OCLC in 2011 revealed that 204,000 Canadians get job seeking help at their public library every month.⁴

We know the value that rural and remote communities can derive from improved access as they will be better able to discover and support economic opportunities. In fact, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada recently emphasized that it is imperative for the “majority of Canada’s Aboriginal communities [to] have access to reliable high-speed internet.”

CFLA-FCAB recommends that the next government commit to \$800M over the next 4 years to support a targeted library upgrade investment fund. Supporting Canada's libraries supports the circular economy and the Canada Sustainable Development Goals.

INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING AND LANGUAGE PRESERVATION

An additional means to supporting the Canada Sustainable Development Goals and creating stronger communities is to commit to supporting Indigenous ways of knowing and language preservation. Indigenous knowledge should be available through all types of media ensuring it is preserved, protected and accessed in a culturally respectful and sensitive manner for use by current and future generations. This can be achieved by enabling public policy that activates the revitalization, use and preservation of Indigenous knowledge and languages and ensuring Indigenous peoples are trained in library services and archival methods to equip them with the skills to retrieve and store information and materials for the community’s use and enjoyment.

Much of the historical, cultural, linguistic and material knowledge of Indigenous peoples’ has been held by libraries, archives, museums, and records centres. Consulting Indigenous communities with respect for proper protocols to access and care for their culturally sensitive records is paramount to preserving knowledge and language. By providing support for Indigenous people with scholarships for education and Internship opportunities to train in library services, whether at the graduate (MLIS) or undergraduate level and for education on Indigenous knowledge and cultural protocols within the library and information community in collaboration with Indigenous

⁴ How Canadian Libraries Stack Up, https://www.oclc.org/content/dam/oclc/reports/canadastackup/214109cef_how_libraries_stack_up.pdf

groups, this measure will help the federal government to act on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action #7, which urges the government to develop a joint strategy to “eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Canadians.” This process will have implications for copyright policies but will inevitably create opportunities for employment for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples at library and archival facilities across Canada.

We strongly believe Indigenous people should be supported to train as professionals in all areas that control the interpretation and preservation of their tradition, history, language and arts.⁵

It is crucial for Indigenous communities to be involved in the process and educating other members of the community to access their cultural artefacts and knowledge is vital. Support for training Indigenous professionals in library services and archival methods will equip them to retrieve and store information and materials for the community's use and enjoyment.

CFLA-FCAB recommends that the next government invest \$XXM over the next 5 years to support Indigenous knowledge and protocols education in library services that will result in respectful protection and preservation of all types of Indigenous knowledge.

SUPPORT FOR DIGITIZATION OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

The directions contained in this strategy contain a roadmap for the development of the shared standards, tools and infrastructure required so that users from jurisdictions across Canada are able to easily access their documentary heritage, and so that our memory institutions are able to properly preserve it. While the directions put forward in the NHDS Strategy are encouraging, sufficient and sustained federal investment is now required to build a coordinated national digitization program.

A coordinated approach to the digitization of Canadian memory institutions' collections should consider access, discovery and preservation of collections, including published and archival materials, and addressing collections housed in all types of memory institutions located in regions across the country.

By supporting a national digitization program, the Government of Canada would:

- Promote cultural literacy by providing increased access to Canadian cultural material;
- Remove barriers to knowledge by providing equal access to heritage content for all Canadians;

⁵<http://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Truth-and-Reconciliation-Committee-Report-and-Recommendations.pdf>. Accessed July 10, 2018.

- Contribute to a feeling of shared Canadian identity, based on diversity and inclusion;
- Create greater educational opportunities to promote research and understanding of Canadian culture;
- Encourage innovation and creativity by inviting artists and entrepreneurs to engage with Canada's cultural content and to use and reuse it to create new works with value to Canadians and the economy;
- Provide global perspective on Canada's culture by connecting national collections with international ones; and,
- Support sound democracy by providing easy access to credible information.

CFLA-FCAB recommends that the next government commit to sustained, increased funding of \$30M over the next five years to support this coordinated national initiative to digitize content and to build the digital infrastructure required to make Canada's rich documentary heritage available to all Canadians.