

2026 Federal Budget CFLA-FCAB Brief to House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

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CFLA-FCAB Recommendations

1. That the Government of Canada build stronger communities and protect democracy by investing \$2M annually to create a fund that will support Canada's libraries to design and deliver learning tools and programs through libraries on digital and AI literacy, identifying misinformation, and avoiding online harms.
2. That the Government of Canada make the Equitable Access to Reading Program permanent, indexed to the cost of living, and sufficiently flexible to fund the full equitable reading lifecycle through organizations with demonstrated national capacity, including CELA, NNELS, and other accessible reading service providers.
3. That the Government of Canada create an Equitable Access Fund to support libraries in promoting understanding of intellectual freedom, protecting patron privacy, maintaining local collections, and responding to censorship pressures.
4. That the Government of Canada support the report of the External Advisory Panel on the Creation and Dissemination of Scientific Information in French by investing \$40 Million per year into a new Research in French Support and Promotion Fund (RFSPF) and assure that libraries are recognized as integral players in the dissemination infrastructure and in knowledge promotion.
5. That the Government of Canada invest \$7M over three years through the Tri-Agency and the Research Support Fund to enable Canadian research libraries to build the repository infrastructure and researcher support services required for successful implementation of the revised Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications.
6. That the Government of Canada continue to recognize, support and appropriately invest in Libraries and Archives Canada so that it can fulfill its vital role and obligations in preserving Canada's documentary and cultural heritage, providing accessible knowledge, and serving as the enduring memory of the federal government.

ABOUT CFLA-FCAB

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA-FCAB) is the united, national voice of Canada's library community. Canadian libraries have the common mission of preserving and disseminating Canada's knowledge and heritage—a crucial component of an innovative, productive and forward-looking country. Our members also provide free access to the information and resources that many Canadians—especially those who face socioeconomic barriers—need to maximize their personal development and wellbeing and their contributions to the economy. As the national voice of Canada's library communities, CFLA-FCAB works to advance library excellence in Canada, champion library values and the value of libraries, and influence national and international public policy impacting libraries and their communities.

CFLA-FCAB supports the submissions of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL/ABRC) and the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC/CBUC).

I. Libraries are Integral to a Vibrant Democracy and a Strong Economy

Libraries are among Canada's most democratic institutions. They are free, welcoming, non-commercial public spaces where people of all ages, incomes, backgrounds, and abilities can access information, technology, learning, culture and connection.

The need for continuing federal investment in digital inclusion has expanded with the increasing use of AI and the spread of misinformation, aggravated by foreign actors. The Government of Canada's 2025 investment of \$27.5M in the Digital Citizen Initiative within Canadian Heritage recognizes the importance of reaching the public directly to address online harms.

Creating a dedicated stream of funding available to libraries for designing and delivering learning tools and programs on digital and AI literacy, identifying and countering misinformation, and avoiding online harms can expand the impact of existing investments and policy changes underway, including those in Public Safety Canada, reaching across diverse populations through the thousands of local libraries already in communities.

Libraries deliver practical solutions directly to their communities. The Government of Canada's connectivity strategy recognizes the role of libraries as anchor institutions with the Connect to Innovate initiative, and libraries appreciate this recognition. Availability of high-speed internet access will not eliminate barriers related to access to devices, accessibility, skills, or confidence. With stable federal support that includes funding for equipment where needed, libraries can expand access to devices, software, and

adaptive technologies, while also supporting necessary learning – in every community in Canada.

Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada build stronger communities and protect democracy by investing \$2M annually to create a fund that will support Canada's libraries to design and deliver learning tools and programs on digital and AI literacy, identifying misinformation, and avoiding online harms, and provide required supporting technology for the public.

II. Equitable Access to Reading for Canadians with Print Disabilities

Canadian libraries strongly supported the launch of the Equitable Access to Reading Program (EARP) in 2024. Budget 2022 allocated \$7 million per year for three years starting in 2024-25, and CELA and NNELS have since received an extension through 2028-29. However, there is still no commitment beyond 2029, creating instability for services used by Canadians with print disabilities.

Accessible reading is not a pilot project; it is essential infrastructure for literacy, education, employment, culture, and inclusion. EARP should support the full equitable reading lifecycle, including title selection, creation and acquisition, Marrakesh Treaty exchange, distribution in users' preferred formats, discovery infrastructure, research and innovation, training, and outreach.

To meet its objective, EARP must be permanent, predictable, indexed, and sufficient to support national service delivery in both official languages by organizations with demonstrated capacity, while centring the knowledge and leadership of persons with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Make the Equitable Access to Reading Program permanent, indexed to the cost of living, and sufficiently flexible to fund the full equitable reading lifecycle through organizations with demonstrated national capacity, including CELA, NNELS, and other accessible reading service providers.

III. Protecting Democracy through Access to Information: Creating an Equitable Access Fund for Libraries

Libraries are champions of an informed democracy, which requires access to a wide range of ideas and information. Libraries encourage community dialogue—even in the face of disagreement. This crucial role requires explicit federal recognition and support in the face of increasing censorship pressures originating from foreign actors.

The urgency of action to combat increasing censorship pressure has been reinforced with the passing of Bill 28 in Alberta, raising serious concerns across the library sector. Libraries need increased support in working together to prepare communities for these threats to accessing information. Changes to Alberta's Libraries Act and related regulatory changes proposed allow the Minister to initiate reviews and respond to complaints concerning public libraries. The new instruments will shift decision-making away from local library boards and trained professionals and create new barriers to access.

Federal action should respect provincial and municipal jurisdiction over public libraries while recognizing the national importance of intellectual freedom and privacy in the pursuit of information and democratic participation. A federal fund for libraries could support non-partisan tools and build capacity within the sector, enabling libraries to work together to create legal and governance resources, model policies, privacy training, data collection on censorship challenges, and public education, offering assistance for libraries serving communities facing targeted censorship pressure.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the Government of Canada create an Equitable Access Fund to support libraries in promoting understanding of intellectual freedom, protecting patron privacy, maintaining local collections, and responding to censorship pressures.

IV. Supporting Open Science and Research Sovereignty: Creation and Dissemination of Scientific Information in French

University libraries are a central pillar of the Canadian research ecosystem. In addition to serving their community, they support the creation, dissemination, preservation and mobilization of scientific knowledge, particularly in terms of open science infrastructure. Despite the rigorous work of librarians and experts to improve access and research services in French, the ubiquitous use of English as the language of science presents important challenges for the vitality and recognition of knowledge in French.

The challenges for university libraries raised by the Partenariat des bibliothèques universitaires du Québec (PBUQ), which are also experienced by institutions across Canada, particularly in French-speaking and French-speaking minority linguistic contexts is important to highlight.

Users of these libraries experience limited access to resources in French to develop French collections because Francophone scientific sources are less abundant than anglophone ones.

CFLA-FCAB identifies the recent [report](#) of the External Advisory Panel on the Creation and Dissemination of Scientific Information in French, and highlights Recommendation 2 which encourages the government to provide a New Dedicated Investment of \$40 Million Per Year, into a new “Research in French Support and Promotion Fund (RFSPF)”. CFLA-FCAB further supports the expansion of the recommendations as identified by the Canadian Association of Research Libraries.

Recommendation 4: That the government support the report of the External Advisory Panel on the Creation and Dissemination of Scientific Information in French by investing \$40 Million per year into a new Research in French Support and Promotion Fund (RFSPF) and assure that libraries are recognized as integral players in the dissemination infrastructure and in knowledge promotion.

V. Library Infrastructure in Support of Open Access to Publicly Funded Research

The forthcoming [revised Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications](#) represents a significant commitment by Canada's federal granting agencies — CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC — to ensure that peer-reviewed research arising from public investment is freely and immediately available to all Canadians.

CFLA-FCAB, alongside the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL), supports the Tri-Agency's ongoing commitment to open access and believes that this updated policy will harmonize Canada's research landscape by aligning with the [Fonds de recherche du Québec \[FRQ\] revised policy](#). The revised Policy will also support the government's broader priorities to champion data sovereignty, and technological autonomy. Situating Canada's publicly funded research in Canadian institutional repositories ensures that the knowledge generated with governmental funds remains housed on Canadian infrastructure.

CFLA-FCAB reinforces that delivering on this mandate requires infrastructure and enhanced capacity, as identified by CARL. Despite having a strong foundation upon which to build, the revised Policy will put significant additional strain on current library resources as both the volume and complexity of research deposits into institutional repositories will greatly increase. A targeted investment of \$7 million over three years, to be granted through the [Tri-Agency Research Support Fund](#) would allow libraries to upgrade repository infrastructure, expand author support services, and coordinate nationally to ensure consistent implementation across institutions of all sizes.

Recommendation 5: That the government invest \$7M over three years through the Tri-Agency and the Research Support Fund to enable Canadian research libraries

to build the repository infrastructure and researcher support services required for successful implementation of the revised Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications.

VI. Supporting Libraries and Archives Canada essential function in Canadian society

Alongside CARL, CFLA-FCAB applauds the federal government's recent provision of additional permanent annual funding for Libraries and Archives Canada (LAC) to improve response times and clear backlogs in the access to information and privacy (ATIP) system. The Government of Canada's acknowledgement and commitment to this essential service is commendable.

ATIP services are only one of the critical liberties LAC enables for Canadians. LAC records the nation's governance. They capture, preserve and share records of enduring value from all branches of government, set standards and rules for record-keeping. They provide schedules to departments, agencies and other organizations of the government for the transfer of records' safekeeping responsibility to the archives, and for public release of records. They have established new processes for digital content and seek to benefit from operational efficiencies afforded by digital technologies. Their non-partisan role in the collection, preservation and access to government records fosters transparency and accountability in government practices and builds citizens' knowledge of their history and culture, an imperative in democratic society.

LAC's mission aligns with government values of respecting universal rights, freedoms and civic duty, strengthening Canadian culture and identity and reinforcing Canadian sovereignty. LAC's commitment to the preservation of Canadian history, promoting Canadian identity and serving the public interest and Canadian society is shared by Canada's libraries, and requires that LAC receive ongoing sufficient funding.

Recommendation 6: Continue to recognize, support and appropriately invest in Libraries and Archives Canada so that it can fulfill its vital role and obligations in preserving Canada's documentary and cultural heritage, providing accessible knowledge, and serving as the enduring memory of the federal government.