

May 24, 2019

Board Chair and Directors
Regional District Members of Okanagan Regional Library

Dear Chair and Directors:

At their meeting on May 22, the Okanagan Regional Library Board heard a report on the challenges facing Canadian public libraries regarding their inability to have affordable access to digital publications such as audiobooks and eBooks, which are currently limited. A summary of key details of that information is included on the attached memo for your information.

To generate additional support and attention for this critical issue, the Okanagan Regional Library Board agreed to ask each of its members councils to request federal government support by sending letters to your local Member of Parliament, local Federal election candidates and the Federal Minister of Canadian Heritage. Members of the Canadian Urban Libraries Council right across Canada will be bringing the same requests to their councils. A draft resolution is attached.

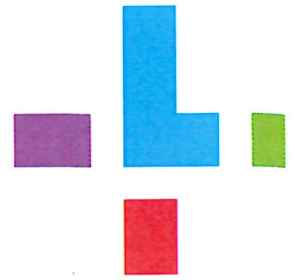
We thank you for considering our request and for your support in recognizing the important role that libraries play in our communities. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

Don Nettleton
Chief Executive Officer
Okanagan Regional Library

Attachments (2)

Cc: Library Board Trustee



May 22, 2019

To all Municipal Councils, Regional District Boards, and Westbank First Nation Councils which are members of the Okanagan Regional Library

The Okanagan Regional Library is requesting your support and endorsement in helping to solve an issue that is impacting our ability to provide services to library users in our system and right across Canada.

- Members of the Canadian Urban Libraries Council, of which the Okanagan Regional Library is a member, spend approximately \$100 million in public funds annually on library acquisitions. Locally, the ORL is spending just over \$2.5 million on library acquisitions each year for our 31 library branches.
- Even with that significant expenditure, we increasingly struggle to obtain digital publications (things like e-books, e-audio books, etc.) from multinational publishers, due to other cost pressures and because of the often strict licensing limitations applied to digital publications.
- In order to properly service our communities, we need to ensure that we have access to and can afford digital publications.
- Multinational publishers are limiting access to digital publications by Canadian libraries, and, even when a publication is made available, are making it prohibitively expensive to acquire most digital publications.
- By way of example, Canadian author Louise Penny's book "Kingdom of the Blind" is available to libraries for \$13 as a paperback, \$22 in hard cover and \$60 in digital format. The \$60 cost allows the book to be checked out electronically 52 times or for 2 years – whichever happens first. A paper edition would be expected to last 3-4 years at a substantially reduced cost. The book is currently not available to Canadian libraries in any e-audio format.
- Those restrictions and costs make it difficult for libraries to provide important services in our communities that our customers want and need. We are integral to developing proficient readers of all ages, and to ensuring that kids succeed in school through early literacy programs. More and more, our digital literacy programs ensure that ORL citizens can contribute to our digital world.
- Additionally, for many seniors, low income families, youth and new Canadians, libraries are a crucial tool for participation in their communities – from education to searching for jobs to consuming Canadian cultural materials.
- Restrictions on libraries accessing digital publications – including both books and newspapers – hampers our capacity to provide modern, digitized services to those demographic groups and other library users. As a result we are increasingly unable to properly serve our community

What are we asking you to do to assist?

1. We are asking you to recognize the important role that libraries play our communities and, in turn, ask the Federal government to prioritize finding a solution to the barriers that face Canadian libraries accessing digital publications. Attached is a draft resolution that I would ask council to consider and support to signal your support. Approved motions should be

forwarded by you to the local Member of Parliament, local Federal election candidates, and the Federal Minister of Canadian Heritage.

2. In your conversations with senior levels of government and the public, continue to mention the access challenges being faced by Libraries and try to get their commitment to support solutions to these issues going forward

Please let us know your council/Boards decision regarding the above action steps, and copy us on any correspondence that you forward.

Thank you for considering these issues and for your support of your Okanagan Regional Library and all Canadian Libraries!

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Don Nettleton", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Don Nettleton, CEO

Okanagan Regional Library

Draft Municipal Motion

Whereas, the (name of municipality/Regional District/1st Nation) recognizes the important role that libraries play in our community. Libraries and the early literacy programs they run are integral to developing proficient readers and ensuring that children succeed in school. More and more, digital literacy programs run by libraries also help ensure that citizens can contribute to our digital world. Additionally vulnerable demographic groups, including seniors, low income families, youth and new Canadians rely on access to libraries as an important tool for their participation in the community – from education to searching for jobs to consuming Canadian cultural materials, and

WHEREAS, libraries in our community recognize that our users increasingly seek to access digital publications offered by multinational publishers, and that access to those publications is too often curtailed by prohibitively high licensing fees or else entirely denied to Canadian libraries, and

WHEREAS libraries must be in a position to offer digital publications to their users as part of their service offering to our community, particularly given the contemporary rapid pace of digitization of educational and cultural materials,

Now, be it resolved that the (name of municipality/Regional District/1st Nation) do hereby:

1. Indicate our support for the Canadian Urban Libraries Council in its efforts to increase access to digital publications for library users in (name of municipality/Regional District/1st Nation) and across Canada;
2. Call on the Federal government to investigate barriers faced by libraries in acquiring digital publications and the problems that poses for vulnerable demographic groups in Canada; and
3. Further ask the Federal government to develop a solution that increases access to digital publications across Canada and assist libraries in meeting the cost requirements to acquire digital publications