

# Pre-Budget Consultation 2012

## Submission by the Canadian Library Association

### 1. Economic Recovery and Growth

***Given the current climate of federal and global fiscal restraint, what specific federal measures do you feel are needed for a sustained economic recovery and enhanced economic growth in Canada?***

*(Please limit your response to 350 words)*

**The Canadian Library Association (CLA) recommends that the Government of Canada invest in library infrastructure**, which helps to improve Canadians' quality of life and is key to our future economic development.

Public libraries provide essential resources to help stimulate Canada's national economy. They play a vital role in assisting people with literacy skills, résumé creation, job applications, and re-education opportunities.

CLA is concerned about recent budget cuts to federal government libraries and to Library and Archives Canada which will negatively impact their ability to provide front-line services, resulting in reduced access to information not only for federal employees, but for all Canadians. CLA is also concerned about ongoing access to and preservation of government information, in light of the cuts to federal libraries, and the decision to make more government information only available online. **CLA recommends re-investment in federal libraries.**

All Canadians, regardless of economic status or location, should have the ability to access information through broadband connection to the Internet, and the assistance they need to become digitally literate. For many Canadians, the Community Access Program (CAP) provided this access.

This program has been cancelled despite acknowledgement that only 79% of Canadian households currently have an Internet connection. Clearly, community-based Internet access is still needed to supplement home access. And the demand for greater broadband access is not a rural issue alone. Canadians who live in poverty, new Canadians, and people with special needs tend to congregate in Canada's cities. While broadband may technically be available in those cities, it is not available to many urban or rural Canadians without public access computing. Without CAP, the needs of those without connection cannot adequately be met. And as more government information is made available only online, it is imperative that Canadians have access to both the tools and the skills they need to find and use that information.

With targeted investments, libraries can continue to provide a thriving public environment within Canada's communities. CLA thanks the government for its commitments to libraries, particularly the investments made through the Economic Action Plan; however, as these have all been short-term initiatives. There is much more that can be done.

## 2. Job Creation

**As Canadian companies face pressures resulting from such factors as uncertainty about the U.S. economic recovery, a sovereign debt crisis in Europe, and competition from a number of developed and developing countries, what specific federal actions do you believe should be taken to promote job creation in Canada, including that which occurs as a result of enhanced internal and international trade?**

*(Please limit your response to 350 words)*

Public library infrastructure investments will enable economic growth and job creation in Canada. Infrastructure investments have a vital impact on economic growth and play a key role in maintaining Canada's economic health and prosperity.

Following the recent report of the Expert Review Panel on Research and Development, six major recommendations have been provided to maximize the effect of federal programs that contribute to innovation and create economic opportunities for business. **CLA recommends that the Government of Canada recognize and implement a role for Canada's libraries to play in key Research and Development (R&D)**, in both the private and public sectors.

In supporting R&D in the private sector, the government should include libraries as key partners in their strategies. Through libraries, businesses, including SMEs and start-ups, can leverage existing information resources and technology infrastructure to support their R&D initiatives.

In the public sector, federal libraries play a crucial role in economic growth and innovation. The librarians provide essential support to their departments, with many demonstrating expertise in specialized subject areas, in addition to their library skills. Federal librarians and libraries contribute directly to the quality of all public services, which will help the government reach its goals to move Canada forward to a more innovative economy. Re-investment in libraries will be beneficial for R&D.

Finally, the federal government must play a national and lead role in dedicated investments for education. Libraries play a vital role in assisting Canadians with both formal and informal education opportunities, and provide services for continuing education and re-training. Through these opportunities, Canadians are provided with the services, resources and information they need to learn and apply the necessary skills to further Canada's future economic development.

## 3. Demographic Change

**What specific federal measures do you think should be implemented to help the country address the consequences of, and challenges associated with, the aging of the Canadian population and of skills shortages?**

*(Please limit your response to 350 words)*

**CLA recommends that the Government of Canada invest in foreign credential recognition**, in order to formally recognize the skills of internationally trained workers and provide them with the

opportunity to work in Canada more quickly. CLA applauds the federal government for its preliminary work on this front; however, there is much more that can be done.

The integration of internationally trained professionals into the Canadian workforce is a noteworthy challenge for all groups. In order to speed up the integration process, **CLA recommends that the federal government provide support for national organizations** representing non-regulated professions (such as librarianship) to expand their capacity to evaluate the qualifications of individuals trained in other countries to enable those workers to be more quickly integrated into the labour market. Having foreign-trained workers using the skills they already possess will require less investment in re-training and will allow those individuals to make substantial contributions to the Canadian economy much sooner.

With an aging Canadian population and increasing retirement rates expected in the next several years, investing in the integration of internationally trained individuals will enhance the range of skilled staff required by the library community. These critical investments will create more jobs and help to stimulate the national economy.

#### **4. Productivity**

**With labour market challenges arising in part as a result of the aging of Canada's population and an ongoing focus on the actions needed for competitiveness, what specific federal initiatives are needed in order to increase productivity in Canada?**

*(Please limit your response to 350 words)*

**CLA recommends that the government develop targeted policies to ensure that Canadians have both access to emerging and digital technology, and the skills needed to take advantage of the opportunities that this technology provides.** Canada has been a world leader of digital technology but has not taken full advantage of its infrastructure.

Libraries serve two primary functions: first, to provide access to information in whatever format it is produced or used; and second, to preserve information to ensure that it is accessible in the future. Libraries can play an important role in the development of a stronger digital economy.

In the government's development of a Canadian digital economy strategy, improving the digital literacy of Canadians must be priority. School libraries and librarians have a valuable role to play both in helping to design and teach digital literacy and to ensure that both teachers and students are aware of how to use electronic media wisely. Public and academic libraries also have a role to play in ensuring that Canadians of all ages are able to access the information and skills they need to be full participants in the digital economy.

But we need investment not only in technology and digital skills, but also in content – the sum of which represents our cultural heritage. Canadian cultural industries are vital economic drivers; those cultural workers create works which must be acquired, made accessible, and preserved for future generations. **CLA calls on the government to reinvest in the capacity of libraries, particularly**

**through increased funding to Library and Archives Canada, to preserve, digitize and provide access to our documentary heritage.**

Libraries play a vital role in Canada's communities, and in turn, can play a vital role in assisting the federal government to face these productivity challenges. With critical investments, libraries can leverage the information and services that are already provided to Canadians, in order to positively impact productivity, job creation and economic growth.