



CLA responds to 2013 Federal Budget

(Ottawa, April 2, 2013) - Last Thursday, the Federal Minister of Finance, the Honourable Jim Flaherty, presented the 2013 federal budget (Economic Action Plan 2013), entitled *Jobs, Growth and Long-Term Prosperity*. This budget lacks the drama of major spending reductions that marked the 2012 budget. The focus of the 2013 budget is on job creation and infrastructure, with particular attention to skilled trades and in-demand jobs.

The government remains in deficit, with an \$18.7 billion shortfall projected this year, but maintains its commitment to balancing the budget by 2015-2016, in time for the next federal election.

In its written submission for the government's pre-budget consultation, CLA called for re-investment in federal libraries including Library and Archives Canada, support for broadband connectivity, targeted policies to ensure that Canadians have both access to emerging and digital technology, a role for libraries in research and development, and support to national organizations for non-regulated professions to evaluate foreign-trained workers.

CLA is pleased to see a number of these issues addressed in the budget, including support for broadband and connectivity, and assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications (though it is unclear whether the expanded list will include any LIS-related occupations). We are also pleased that funding has been allocated to support library services to persons with print disabilities.

However, CLA would like to see increased government investment and clearer, more open communication regarding modernization strategies at Library and Archives Canada. CLA continues to be very concerned about the 2012 federal budget cuts to Library and Archives Canada and its subsequent capacity to fulfill its legislated mandate to preserve the documentary heritage and memory of Canada for the benefit of present and future generations, especially as it adapts to the realities of the digital environment. Additionally, CLA will continue to appeal for policies that enable Canadians to access and use digital technologies made available through the investment in broadband.

Key issues for libraries from the 2013 budget include:

Expanding Library Services for Blind and Partially Sighted Persons

- To improve library services available to the print-disabled community, the budget proposes \$3 million in 2013-14 to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind for a National Digital Hub.

Transforming the National Research Council and Supporting the Commercialization of Research

- Budget 2013 proposes to provide \$121 million over two years to invest in the National Research Council's strategic focus to help the growth of innovative businesses in Canada. Additionally, \$20 million is proposed over three years to help small and medium-sized enterprises access research and business development services at universities, colleges and other non-profit research institutions of their choice

through a new pilot program to be delivered through the National Research Council's Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC-IRAP).

Community Improvement Fund / Building Canada Fund

- Budget 2013 proposes the Community Improvement Fund with funding of \$32.2 billion over 10 years, consisting of an indexed Gas Tax Fund and the incremental GST Rebate for Municipalities to offer stable, predictable funding to support community infrastructure projects. The list of eligible investment categories will be expanded and will include broadband and connectivity. The proposed Building Canada Fund will provide \$14 billion over 10 years to support infrastructure projects of national, regional and local significance, which also includes connectivity and broadband.

Support for First Nations Infrastructure

- Funding of \$155 million over 10 years from the National Infrastructure Component of the new Building Canada Fund and funding from the Gas Tax Fund component of the Community Improvement Fund will also be allocated to the First Nations Infrastructure Fund, which highlights broadband connectivity as one of five priority areas.

Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications

- Economic Action Plan 2013 announces the Government's commitment to improving foreign credential recognition for additional target occupations under the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications.

For further information, please contact

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