



Digital Canada 150 misses opportunities, says CLA

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The Canadian Library Association (CLA) has for some time called for the creation of a federal strategy to meet the demands and opportunities presented by the global digital economy. In July 2010, CLA made a [submission](#) to the federal government's Digital Economy Consultation. The consultation was conducted jointly by Industry Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and Canadian Heritage.

As the voice of Canada's libraries, we believe Canadians deserve access to the digital tools and learning that will help them succeed in a changing world. While we welcome the initiatives outlined in the Digital Canada 150 plan, we have some concerns about its scope and ambition, and believe that some opportunities have been missed.

For broadband connectivity, the plan's goal is that over 98% of all Canadians will have access to high-speed Internet at 5 megabits per second (Mbps). This is an unambitious target that puts Canada at the lowest end of all OECD countries. Many countries are aiming for speeds of 100 Mbps to 1 Gbps. While CLA welcomes the plan to provide funding for Internet in rural and remote areas, to make connectivity projects eligible for infrastructure grants, and to auction more wireless spectrum in order to increase competition and access, we are concerned that these actions and the funding level provided may be too small to ensure robust and affordable Internet.

CLA also welcomes the plan to increase online access to government services, information, and data. However, we have previously expressed our concerns that the Action Plan on Open Government may in fact limit access by reducing Web-accessible information and by not providing resources for proper archiving, cataloguing, and digitization, for example through Library and Archives Canada (LAC). Similarly, while CLA supports the partnership of Library and Archives Canada and Canadiana.org for the digitization and online publication of historical images, it is concerned about the wider implications for availability and access of limiting the scope of LAC's mandate.

CLA also takes note of the reforms to private sector privacy laws through the announced Digital Privacy Act. While we support requirements for clearer approvals from individuals for the collecting and sharing of their personal information, and requirements to report and keep records of privacy breaches, we are concerned about the potential for the proliferation of

secret, warrantless disclosure of personal information implied in the new immunity for voluntary disclosure.

Finally, CLA is concerned that Digital Canada 150 ignores several imperatives that we have put forward previously. CLA believes that all Canadians should have access to affordable, equitable and robust information technology. Not only does this plan miss opportunities in robustness and speed, it does not adequately address the opportunity to ensure every Canadian has access to computer equipment, other than a program to refurbish used computers. The plan also does nothing to ensure that Canadians have the opportunity to develop digital literacy skills, that those with disabilities have access to adaptive technology, and that Internet traffic is kept neutral so as to encourage a level playing field and favour innovation. To truly lead to a “digital Canada” a more robust, wide-ranging plan is needed.