

Draft Letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage

Dear,

I am writing on behalf of the Strathcona County Library, which provides an essential service and is invaluable to Strathcona County residents. Libraries and the programs they provide are integral to ensuring a thriving democracy. Public library digital literacy programs help ensure that citizens are able to contribute to our digital world. Additionally, for many seniors, lower income families, youth, and new Canadians, public libraries provide access to resources they may not otherwise be able to obtain. Canadians rely on libraries as an important tool for their participation in the community - from early literacy and education to searching for jobs to consuming Canadian cultural materials.

Public Libraries annually spend approximately \$100 million in public funds annually to acquire digital content, physical library materials and other resources in demand by library users. Even with this significant expenditure, our public libraries increasingly struggle to obtain digital content from multinational publishers due to high costs and prohibitive licensing limitations. 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 form. The \$60 cost would allow the e-book to be checked out 52 times or for 2 years - whichever happens first, without the library 'owning' the item. A paper edition would be expected to last 3 to 4 years at a substantially reduced cost. The book is currently not available to Canadian libraries in any e-audio format due to exclusive licensing models that are not offered to public libraries.

The critical challenge is that multinational publishers are limiting public access to digital content, and, even when a publication is made available, are making it prohibitively expensive for public libraries to acquire most digital publications. If we cannot appropriately serve the public with timely access to digital publications, our communities suffer. We ask the Federal government's support to develop solutions to the lack of public access to digital publications, especially as governments seek to identify community tools that can help vulnerable groups grow and reach their potential.

Along with municipalities across Canada, we are asking the Federal government to recognize the critical role that libraries play in serving our communities by providing access to resources that allow community members to learn and grow. The Federal government has a vital role to play in ensuring that Canadian libraries can meet the growing demand for digital publications. We ask you to prioritize finding a solution to the barriers that Canadian libraries face in accessing digital publications.

Yours sincerely,
Mayor Rod Frank