

7 May 2012

The Honourable James Moore, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages
15 Eddy Street
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0M5

Dear Minister Moore:

The Canadian Library Association wishes to express its serious concerns about the negative impact of government budget cuts on libraries in federal departments and at Library and Archives Canada. As more departments issue notices to staff, indications are that libraries are being hit hard by budget reductions.

At Library and Archives Canada, 430 people have been given notices, with more than 200 jobs to be cut over the next three years, representing a reduction of 20% of their workforce. They have also had to cut their acquisitions budget, end their role in national inter-library loan activities, and cut the National Archival Development Program, which has provided funding to Canadian archival organizations to increase their capacity to preserve archival materials and make them available to Canadians. These cuts will negatively impact Library and Archives Canada's ability to provide front-line services, resulting in reduced access to information for Canadians.

Our national library and archives has a broad mandate to acquire, preserve and make available the documentary heritage of Canada. It is also responsible for the management of the archival records of government. Even before the cuts, Library and Archives Canada was challenged to fulfill its mandate; with this reduction in their financial and staff resources, the job becomes even more difficult.

Canadians expect to have access to the vast wealth of materials managed by Library and Archives Canada, which includes books, journals, photographs, newspapers, personal and corporate archives, government records, paintings, film, and sound recordings. The Canadian library and archival communities expect leadership on professional issues from their national institution, including standards for activities and support for the provision of quality library and archival services to Canadians across the country. These expectations cannot adequately be met with the level of resources now available to Library and Archives Canada.

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CLA has also received reports that many libraries in federal government departments will be losing staff; some will be shuttering their libraries altogether. Not only does this result in less support for departmental staff and researchers to access relevant information; but as many of these libraries also provide direct services to the public, Canadians will be prevented from having access to that information and to the expertise of the staff. Government librarians provide essential support to their departments.

Many of the staff have expertise in specialized subject areas, in addition to their library skills, which helps them to assess and interpret information sources. Good policy relies on good information. Government librarians and government libraries contribute directly to the quality of all public services. With these budget cuts, services to Canadians will be negatively impacted.

Library and Archives Canada and other federal libraries provide Canadians with access to unique documents chronicling our collective heritage. They support our students and researchers, historians and genealogists, writers and filmmakers.

They support our government.

For example, the federal government celebrates anniversaries of historic importance to Canada; the website of the Department of Canadian Heritage indicates its support for many of these events, including this year the Diamond Jubilee and the War of 1812. In a few years we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. And where does the government find the materials that provide the context for these commemorations – the photos, diaries, letters, sound clips, unpublished documents and published histories? In its libraries and archives.

When our documentary heritage institutions are denied resources, the collective memory of our country is at risk. If these institutions cannot acquire new material and preserve existing documentation, future generations will have nothing to tell them of their past. If these institutions cannot make their material accessible to Canadians, we lose the context for our place in history.

In the 2012 Federal Budget, Table A1.11 illustrates “Planned Savings – Heritage Portfolio”. The four national museums, the National Gallery of Canada and the Canada Council for the Arts were all exempt from budget reductions. Yet Library and Archives Canada was subject to a reduction of \$9.6 million over the next three years. Why is it that our documentary heritage is bearing the burden of cuts in this sector?

Libraries and archives, and particularly our national Library and Archives, must be adequately supported to collect, preserve and make available our unique history.

The Canadian Library Association calls on the Government of Canada to consider the impact of these cuts on the ability for all Canadians to access information, and to re-evaluate spending priorities to ensure that adequate services will be maintained in all government libraries.



Karen Adams
CLA President

Cc: The Hon. Jim Flaherty, P.C., M.P. Minister of Finance