



Atlantic Provinces Library Association

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Hon. Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
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March 15, 2021

**Open letter regarding the de-funding of the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA)
and the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)**

Dear Minister Freeland,

On behalf of the members of the Atlantic Provinces Library Association (APLA), I am writing to request reversal of the decision to de-fund the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS). I refer specifically to the 2020 Fall Economic Statement which shows a 25% per annum cut to the funding for each organization, eliminating their combined federal support of \$4 million by fiscal 2024-25. The Statement indicates this cut will “support the transition towards industry-based production and distribution of accessible reading materials to Canadians with print disabilities.” Without details on how the publishing industry will provide services parallel to those offered by CELA and NNELS, we are deeply concerned about the availability of reading materials for Canadians with print disabilities.

As library workers and supporters, the approximately 400 members of APLA know that access to reading materials directly impacts academic and economic success as well as social inclusion.

Daily we encounter people with print disabilities, and we have come to rely upon our colleagues at both CELA and NNELS for advice, assistance and alternate format materials to enable their success. For example, one-member librarian working in an Atlantic post-secondary institution reports using a CELA program to provide 100+ titles, including textbooks and supplementary course readings, for over 40 students in just a few years. Having no on-demand service for the production and distribution of titles in alternate formats will seriously impede the participation of print disabled students at all levels of education.

The members of APLA respectfully request that the federal government reinstate fully its funding to CELA and NNELS as part of its commitment to equity and inclusion of people with disabilities. Working together, governments, libraries, publishers and service organizations such as CELA and NNELS can ensure those with print disabilities are wholly included in Canadian society.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann M. H. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ann M H Smith

APLA President, 2020-2021

cc. Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Development

cc. Todd Kyle, Chair, Canadian Federation of Library Associations – Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques