

The Ontario Book Publishers Organization  
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Hon. Lisa MacLeod  
Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries  
6th Floor, 438 University Ave.  
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

September 30, 2020

Dear Minister MacLeod:

I am writing to express Ontario publishers' concern about the decision made by numerous Ontario school boards to move school library staff into classrooms and close access to school libraries as part of their fall 2020 re-opening plan. We're sympathetic to the difficult decisions that the Ministry of Education is making during this challenging time, but we are concerned that this decision is short-sighted and that in addition to the likely long-lasting negative impacts on student literacy and progress, the decision will negatively impact the entire Ontario book industry including, publishers, wholesalers, and booksellers.

As you know from our work on your Ministerial Advisory Committee on Book & Magazine Publishing in the spring, the Ontario Book Publishers Organization represents 46 Canadian owned-Ontario-based book publishers. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario's book publishers distributed nearly \$257 million in wages, salaries and benefits. In 2017 they contributed \$500 million to the provincial GDP. Like other industries, publishing has been severely disrupted by COVID-19. According to surveys taken by the Association of Canadian Publishers, Canadian book publishers anticipate a 30-50% decline in sales in 2020.

School purchasing offers some stability for publishers, and Teacher Librarians play a critical role in this purchasing. With Teacher Librarians' efforts focused elsewhere, schools will likely schools purchase better-known American books or redirect library budgets to other purposes entirely. With reduced access to Canadian books that reflect students' experiences and meet Ontario curriculum objectives, student success will be adversely affected, and Ontario small businesses will be further impacted in an already unstable economy.

We, along with the Ontario Library Association and the Ontario School Library Association, have written to Minister Lecce about this pressing issue and hope that you will support our efforts to advocate that the Ministry of Education work with school boards ensure that school libraries remain open and accessible to students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Holly Kent', is written in a cursive style.

Holly Kent  
Executive Director  
Ontario Book Publishers Organization