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September 30, 2020

Hon. Lisa MacLeod

Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries

438 University Avenue, 6th Floor

Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

Delivered by email: Minister.MacLeod@ontario.ca

Dear Minister,

I am writing to express our deep concern about decisions made by numerous Ontario school boards to reassign school library staff and close access to school libraries as part of their fall re-opening plans. We know that these are extremely challenging times and that the Ministry of Education is working hard to ensure students have a safe and successful learning experience this year; however, this decision not only risks long-term student success, but will also have an unintended negative impact on Ontario publishers, wholesalers, and independent booksellers who serve the school market.

ACP represents 115 book publishers across the country. More than half of our membership is based in Ontario. Publishers are the hub of the book supply chain and have direct business relationships with authors, illustrators, printers, distributors, bookstores, libraries, and the education sector. As small businesses, we contribute to local economies; in 2017, the Ontario book industry generated \$465.2M in GDP and employed more than 6,000 Ontarians across the province.

Like other creative industries, publishing has been severely disrupted by COVID-19. On average, English-language publishers anticipate a decline in sales revenue of approximately 50% this year. Fewer sales will reduce royalties paid to authors and limit publishers' ability to invest in new titles and maintain staffing levels.

As we enter a fall season that will be characterized by continued uncertainty in the retail sector, institutional purchasing should offer some stability, particularly for children's and educational publishers. Teacher librarians play a critical role in coordinating this purchasing. Where budget remains available for print and digital books, their professional expertise and judgement will help ensure that Canadian-authored books are purchased and that Ontario companies benefit from the province's investment in school resources.



Past experience shows that without teacher librarians in place, schools tend to purchase better known American books or redirect library budgets to other purposes. The end result is reduced access to books that reflect students' experiences and meet curriculum objectives, and reduced revenues for local businesses that produce and supply the rich diversity of Canadian books available to today's students. As our industry works towards COVID-19 recovery, stability in institutional markets, supported by a return-to-school plan that includes teacher librarians and access to school library collections, will be critical.

We have written to Minister Lecce to request that the Ministry of Education work with school boards to revise their re-opening plans to ensure that students and teachers will continue to have access to school library programs, and to take steps to ensure that funding for school libraries is protected. We would appreciate your support of these recommendations.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns and for your ongoing support of Ontario's book industry.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Edwards
Executive Director

c.c. Ms. Karen Thorne-Stone, CEO, Ontario Creates
Ms. Shelagh Paterson, Executive Director, Ontario Library Association
Ms. Holly Kent, Executive Director, Ontario Book Publishers Organization